

Great Stories of
**Courage &
Endurance**

Great Stories of Courage & Endurance

SELECTED AND CONDENSED BY
THE EDITORS OF READER'S DIGEST
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
THE LORD HUNT
OF LLANFAIR WATERDINE, KG, CBE, DSO

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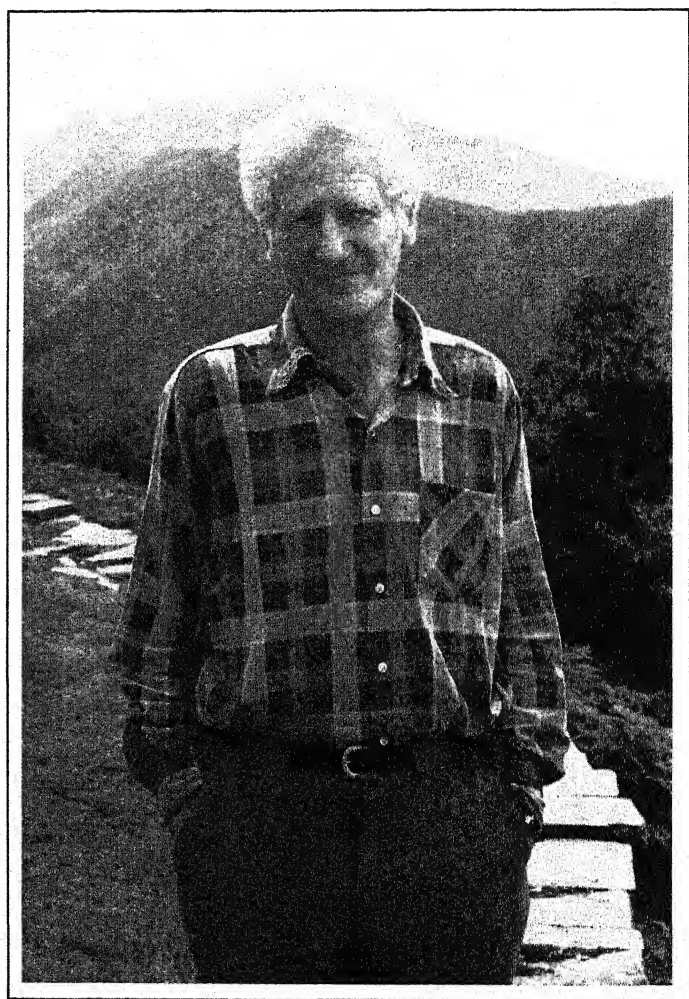
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Introduction

BY THE LORD HUNT OF LLANFAIR WATERDINE, KG, CBE, DSO

FOR MANY OF US, the extraordinary experiences of other men and women provide a welcome flight for our imagination, away from the humdrum business of living our ordinary lives. It is often said that truth is stranger than fiction, and a true story is certainly more compelling than fiction if it reveals how real people have risen above normal behaviour in their reaction to extraordinary circumstances. The more such a story exposes the whole truth about human conduct in moments of danger or periods of hardship, the more fascinating it is. I give high marks to those who have fulfilled these criteria in bringing together this collection of books, condensed into the manageable proportions of two neat volumes.

These astonishing tales reveal how very different people have faced up to situations of great difficulty in a wide variety of times and circumstances. The two related themes of courage and endurance run through all of them, and other human qualities are highlighted. For a true story, if it is to carry conviction, should not dwell only on the heroic streak in human nature. We should be told of the human weaknesses to which all of us are prone, especially when exposed to hardship and tested by fear. I am glad that some of these stories also reveal the shortcomings of some of those whose deeds are recorded and which, in one or two instances, challenge deeply ingrained social inhibitions. In *Alive*, the story of air-crash survivors in the Andes, even the taboo against cannibalism was set aside to stave off starvation.

Yet courage and endurance illuminate all these events. In an age of rapidly changing values they are qualities which command constant and universal respect. They are virtues for all ages and for all time, the world over. When I was thirteen, it was the news of the deaths of Mallory and Irvine on Everest which made me want to climb. It was with that and other early memories in mind that I wrote in my book *The Ascent of Everest*: "Ultimately, the justification for climbing Everest, if any justification is needed, will lie in the

seeking of their 'Everests' by others, stimulated by this event as we were inspired by others before us."

There is no doubt that this has happened many times in the thirty years since we first climbed that mountain. It is also true that among any group of explorers or others who court high risks, it is always the example of one or two in their membership that provides the inspiration. In a long life, during which I have experienced more than my share of adventures, I have often had reason to be grateful to companions whose conduct has given me the resolve to follow their example. This power of example is marvellously illustrated in *Endurance*, about the explorer Ernest Shackleton, in *The Naked Island*, about British and Australian prisoners of war in Japanese hands, and in *Survive the Savage Sea*, about an ordinary family shipwrecked in the Pacific. They all show how leadership by example can enable a whole group of individuals to survive in desperate situations. Leadership, and the teamwork it creates, are often a condition of courage and endurance.

Some people, however, stand out as "loners", whether it be by choice or force of circumstance. Their heroism is enhanced by the fact that they face their risks and crises on their own. Such people include those who have to come to terms with death by grave illness; notwithstanding the support of loved ones and physicians, they have to face that prospect, at the end, alone. Anyone like Bob Champion in *Champion's Story*, who, by sheer willpower, laid hold on life and mastered his fate, leaves me feeling humbled by his courage. Violette Szabo, heroine of *Carve Her Name with Pride*, who was executed in 1945 after running appalling risks as an agent of our Special Operations Executive in France, displayed the same degree of lonely courage in different circumstances. Gladys Aylward was also a "loner" who faced death, time and again, as a missionary in China during the stormy years of that country's civil wars and the Japanese invasion. Her story, as told in *The Small Woman*, shows that spiritual faith is one powerful source from which moral strength, and thus courage and endurance, may spring. Her faith gave her a selfless caring for others—a quality also poignantly, and very differently, illustrated in *83 Hours Till Dawn*, in which two parents were kept in agonized suspense by the threat of their daughter's imminent murder at the hands of brutal kidnappers.

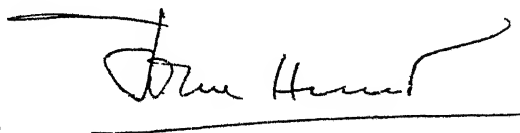
I have left until the last two stories with which I can claim special connections. One of these is *High Adventure*. Ed Hillary was one of my companions on Everest in 1953; in a certain sense that was, for both

of us, our highest adventure. With Ed I soon became aware that to dare, to seek excitement through taking risks, was in the very nature of this remarkable man. He has since gone on to do great work for the Sherpa people which reveals that he, too, had that quality of caring for others to add to his own courage and stamina.

Finally I turn to *The White Nile*. As president of the Royal Geographical Society when it celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1980, I was in a special position to review its history of exploration: in particular, those amazing journeys which revealed to western knowledge the secrets of Africa. It seems scarcely possible that, little more than a hundred years ago, in a century of growing materialism, people from the sophisticated western world should have endured so much in pursuit of so materially unrewarding a goal as the source of a river. True, for some fame was the spur, for others like Livingstone, it was the promotion of "commerce and Christianity". But for all of them there was a burning need to know. In Sir Richard Burton, I have a distant relationship on my mother's side of the family. I take some pride in this connection, both because of and despite certain less admirable characteristics which complement his great achievements. I find him reassuringly human, and I admire him despite his jealousy over the discovery of the sources of the Nile by others than himself.

Throughout *The White Nile* we are reminded of the simple truth that explorers are not gods but mere mortals, prone to meanness and pretentious pride, along with those qualities which excite our admiration. I believe it is important to be reminded that those who greatly dare, and endure against all the odds, are not a race apart.

After reading these two volumes I asked myself: what attracts me to these and other tales of courage and endurance? And why do the examples in these stories give me a glimmer of hope about the shape of things to come? I suggest that it is because they show the human capacity for greatness in times of trial and danger. This will, I am sure, stand humanity in good stead in the critical years ahead.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read "John Hunt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Highway Cottage, Aston,
Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

Among the heroic annals of exploration, the discovery of Central Africa and the sources of the White Nile stands out dramatically. The very names of the explorers make the pulses quicken : Richard Burton, the wandering scholar ; John Speke, the tenacious soldier ; the indomitable Samuel Baker and Mary, his beautiful, courageous wife ; David Livingstone, the great missionary and Henry Stanley, the hard-bitten journalist. . . .

Nowhere are their stories better related than in this, the first part of Alan Moorehead's highly acclaimed classic The White Nile. In its pages, we read of thrilling encounters with native tribes and their capricious rulers, of struggles against disease, exhaustion and famine, of extraordinary adventures in literally unmapped territory. It is an enthralling tale of achievement, which makes us proud of our Victorian ancestors.

Prologue

NO UNEXPLORED REGION in our times, neither the heights of the Himalayas, the Antarctic wastes, nor even the hidden side of the moon, has excited quite the same fascination as the mystery of the sources of the Nile. For two thousand years at least, the problem was debated and remained unsolved.

The scope of this account is limited to the years between 1856 and 1877, so we need do no more here than mention briefly the early history of the river. Almost certainly the ancient Egyptians knew the Nile valley from the Mediterranean as far as the present city of Khartoum, where the Blue Nile comes in from the Ethiopian mountains. Probably they knew something of the Blue Nile as well. But the further course of the parent stream, the White Nile, south of Khartoum, remained a matter of endless speculation, and it interested every distinguished geographer of his age.

This was something more than an ordinary field of exploration. In these deserts the river was life itself. Had it failed to flow, even for one season, then all Egypt would have perished. Not to know where the stream came from, not to have any sort of guarantee that it would continue—this was to live in a state of insecurity where only fatalism or superstition could reassure the mind.

The great brown flood came pouring out of the desert, and no one could explain why it should rise and flow over its banks in the Nile delta in September, the driest and hottest time of the year on the Mediterranean littoral; nor how it was possible for the river to continue in its lower reaches for well over a thousand miles through one of the most frightful of all deserts without receiving a single tributary or more than a drop of rain.

About 460 bc Herodotus ascended the Nile as far as the first cataract at Aswân before turning back, having found it impossible to obtain definite information about the source of the river. The Emperor Nero sent two centurions with an expedition into the wastes of Nubia, as the Sudan was then called, but they returned unsuccessful, saying that they had been blocked in the far interior by an impenetrable swamp. Through the centuries that followed China

became known to Europe; America and Australia were discovered, and the land masses and the oceans of the world were mapped and charted very much as they are today. But still, in 1856, the centre of Africa and its inner mystery, the source of the White Nile, remained an enigma.

James Bruce traced the course of the shorter Blue Nile from its source to Khartoum in the seventeen-seventies, but by 1856 even the most determined of explorers of the White Nile had not been able to get beyond the neighbourhood of the present township of Juba, on latitude 5° north. Cataracts, forests of papyrus reeds, malarial fever, the tropical heat, the opposition of the pagan tribes—all these combined to prevent any further progress south. By now that impenetrable blank space in the centre of the continent had become filled in imagination with a thousand monstrosities, dwarf men and cannibals with tails, animals as strange as the fabulous griffin and the salamander, huge inland seas and mountains so high they defied all nature by bearing on their crests, in the equatorial heat, a mantle of perpetual snow.

One of the most persistent legends about the source of the Nile concerned itself with a journey that had been made overland, from the east coast of Africa a little to the north of Zanzibar. According to this legend, a man named Diogenes, a Greek merchant, claimed that in the middle of the first century AD he was returning home from a visit to India and had landed on the African mainland at a place called Rhapta (which might have been the site of the present settlement of Pangani in Kenya). From Rhapta, Diogenes said, he had “travelled inland for a 25-days’ journey and arrived in the vicinity of two great lakes, and the snowy range of mountains whence the Nile draws its twin sources.”

The story was recorded at the time by the Syrian geographer Marinus of Tyre, and it was from the records of Marinus that Ptolemy, the greatest of geographers and astronomers of his time, produced in the middle of the second century AD his celebrated map. It shows the course of the Nile reaching directly southwards from the Mediterranean to the Equator, with the river rising from two round lakes. The lakes in turn are watered from a high range of mountains, the *Lunae Montes*, or Mountains of the Moon.

For 1,700 years Ptolemy’s map remained a geographical curiosity, endlessly disputed yet seldom absolutely discredited. Then in 1848 Johann Rebmann, one of the earliest missionaries in East Africa, came forward with a sensational report that he himself had journeyed inland from the East African coast and had seen a vast

mountain called Kilimanjaro with snow on its summit. In the following year another missionary, Johann Ludwig Krapf, claimed that he had seen from a distance a second snow-capped peak, Mount Kenya, somewhat to the north of Kilimanjaro. Still another missionary, J. J. Erhardt, produced a map which showed a large inland lake which he called the "Sea of Uniamesi". In the early eighteen-fifties, Arab slave and ivory traders, returning to Zanzibar from the far interior, spoke of two great lakes there, one the Ujiji and the other the Nyanza. In addition there were reports of a third lake, the Nyasa, further to the south.

All this was extremely confusing. Were all these lakes in reality one lake? Were Kilimanjaro and Kenya the legendary Mountains of the Moon, or was there another range further inland? And how did both lakes and mountains fit into the supposed pattern of the Nile?

To find the answer to these questions, two explorers, Richard Francis Burton and John Hanning Speke, set off for Africa in 1856. They rejected the route that followed the Nile upstream from Egypt, and decided instead to strike westwards from Zanzibar into the dark interior where no white man had ever been before.

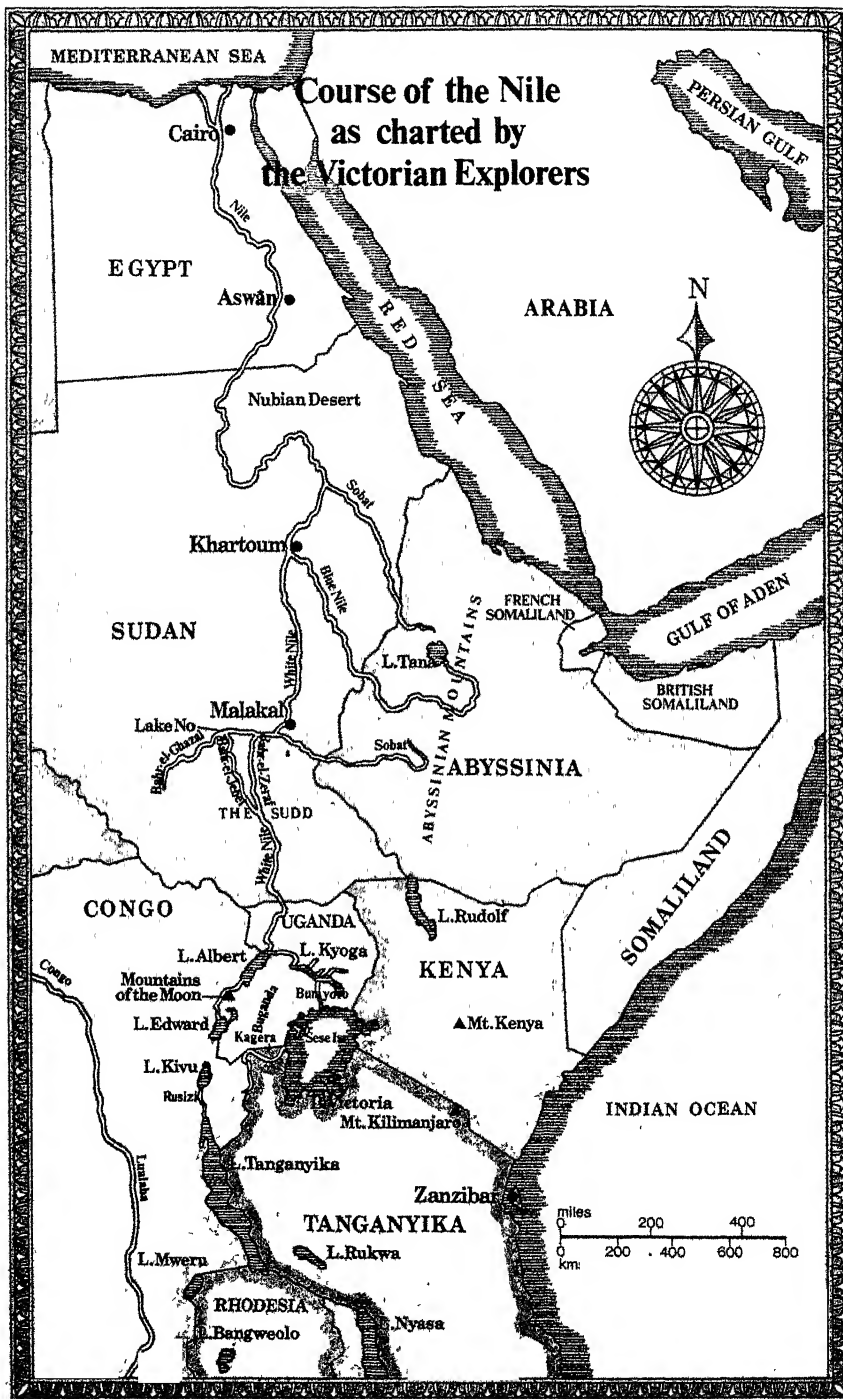
With this new expedition the great age of Central African exploration began.

Chapter One

The Zanzibar that Burton and Speke first saw at the end of 1856 was almost the only centre of overseas commerce along the whole East African seaboard. On the mainland opposite the island, the whole area we now know as Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan and Zaire, was very largely an unmapped, unknown void.

In a vague and general way the sultans of Zanzibar laid claim to a part at least of this vast area, but their power was restricted to the coastline and was not really effective even there. During the dry seasons, slave and ivory caravans found their way into the wilderness that lay beyond and were gone for a year or more, but that was all one ever heard of Central Africa. It was almost as remote and strange as outer space is today.

The island of Zanzibar, however, was a regular port of call for sailing vessels plying the Indian Ocean; and it was in one of these, a British sloop, that Burton and Speke came in on the northeast monsoon from Bombay on December 19, 1856.



Their first view of the island cannot have been so very different from the scene one sees at the present time. Then, as now, a whiff of cloves and tropical spices came out to greet the traveller from the shore, and on the shore itself a slow, oily sea of marvellous blue washed up onto white coral beaches. The jungle that began at the water's edge had a hectic greenness, and the island was oppressed throughout the year by a soporific heat.

Seen from the sea Zanzibar port was an uneven silhouette of earthen hovels and large four-square buildings made of greyish coral. One descried very easily the palace of the sultan, the houses of the consuls and the merchants, and then the minarets rising from the mosques in the town beyond. It was to one of these houses, close to the foreshore, that of the British agent Lieutenant Colonel Atkins Hamerton, that Burton and Speke proposed to make their way.

The anchorage before the town was much congested. Burton counted upwards of sixty Arab dhows which would have been similar to those one sees in Zanzibar now, solid wooden hulls with a single mast and a great lateen sail. In addition there were half a dozen square-rigged merchantmen in port, Americans from Salem, Frenchmen and Hamburgers that had sailed round the Cape from Europe. All these had come to pick up cargoes of copal, coconuts, ivory, hides, tortoiseshell, red pepper, ambergris, beeswax, hippopotamus teeth, rhinoceros horn, cowrie shells (that were called blackamoors' teeth) and anything else that was going in the bazaar. Rubbish of every kind floated by along the foreshore, and it was not unusual for a dead body to be seen among the debris.

In the crooked, dirty streets of Zanzibar, barely twenty feet wide, a teeming procession went by of half-naked negroes, Arabs, Indians, Persians, Swahilis and many others. Cattle and donkeys thrust their way into the crowd. Merchants, sitting cross-legged in holes in the walls, called out their wares, beggars reached up their hands to the passersby, and over all in the stifling air hung the devastating smell of copra and decaying fish. In the bazaars, piles of tropical fruits and vegetables were laid out on straw mats for sale.

In short, it was the sort of scene that is still familiar to any visitor to the East, and the only basic difference here in Zanzibar in 1856—a difference so great that it makes one feel that one is looking into another world—was provided by the presence of the slaves. They roamed through every street, men, women and children, those who had been domesticated by years of captivity, and those who had just arrived from the interior and who were half mad and half dead

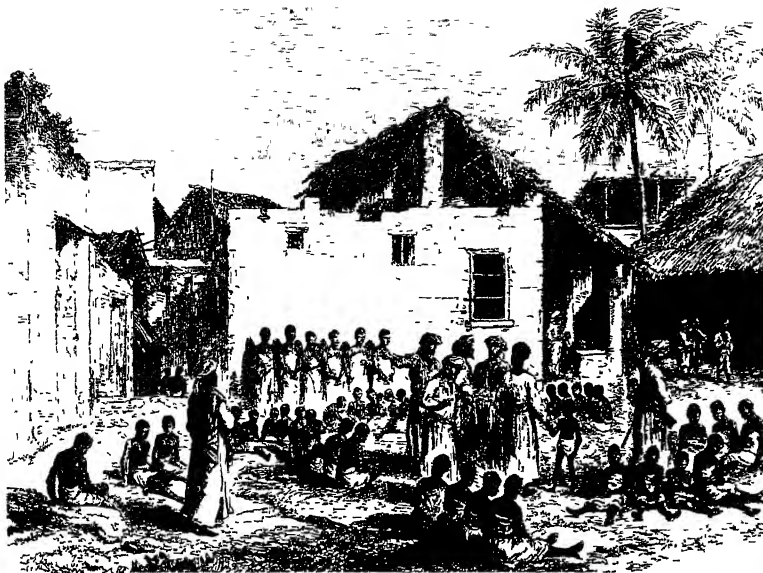
through hunger and maltreatment—naked, bewildered creatures with teeth filed into points and cicatrices on their bodies.

The scene had already been effectively described by Thomas Smee, the commander of the British research ship *Ternate*, which visited Zanzibar in 1811.

"The show," Smee wrote, "commences about four o'clock in the afternoon. The slaves, set off to the best advantage by having their skins cleaned and burnished with cocoa-nut oil, their faces painted with red and white stripes, which is here esteemed elegance, and the hands, noses, ears and feet ornamented with a profusion of bracelets of gold and silver and jewels, are ranged in a line, commencing with the youngest, and increasing to the rear according to their size and age. At the head of this file, which is composed of all sexes and ages from six to sixty, walks the person who owns them; behind and at each side, two or three of his domestic slaves, armed with swords and spears, serve as a guard. The procession passes through the marketplace and the principal streets; the owner holding forth in a kind of song the good qualities of his slaves and the high prices that have been offered for them.

"When any of them strikes a spectator's fancy the line immediately stops, and a process of examination ensues, which, for minuteness, is unequalled in any cattle market in Europe. The intending purchaser, having ascertained there is no defect in the faculties of speech, hearing, etc., that there is no disease present, and that the slave does not snore in sleeping, which is counted a very great fault, next proceeds to examine the person; the mouth and the teeth are first inspected and afterwards every part of the body in succession, not even excepting the breasts etc. of the girls, many of whom I have seen handled in the most indecent manner in the public market by their purchasers; after which, if the price be agreed to, they are stripped of their finery and delivered over to their future master. They had in general a very dejected look; some groups appeared so ill-fed that their bones seemed as if ready to pierce the skin. From such scenes one turns away with pity and indignation . . ."

In the forty-five years that had intervened between Captain Smee's report and the arrival of Burton and Speke in Zanzibar, a great deal had been achieved by the conscience of the world. By the eighteen-thirties slavery had been abolished in the British Empire, and trade on the Atlantic west coast of Africa was already dying out. In 1845 the sultan of Zanzibar had declared that the export of slaves was forbidden (though slavery within his dominions continued to be



The slave market in Zanzibar.

legal) British and French men-of-war patrolled the coast in search of Arab dhows bringing negroes from the mainland.

But, with a tradition of at least two thousand years of slaving behind them, none of the east-coast Arab dealers had as yet dreamed of giving up the trade. No Arab regarded it as any more evil or abnormal than, presumably, a horse dealer regards the buying and selling of horses today. And so the caravans were still raiding into the interior, and Zanzibar market was as crowded as ever. Between twenty and forty thousand slaves were still imported into the island every year, about one third of these being reserved for work on the plantations (which was still legal), and the remainder being destined, illegally, for export to Arabia, Persia, Egypt, Turkey and even further afield. A child worth a pound or two in Zanzibar would fetch up to twenty pounds in Persia, and it was no difficult matter to hide the slaves in caves in the jungle until the dhows were ready to take them off by night. There was tremendous wastage, even among those slaves who had survived the journey from their villages inland to the coast: some thirty per cent of the males died of disease and malnutrition every year in Zanzibar.

It was the wild slaves from the interior who caused most of the lawlessness. They roamed the streets in search of food like packs of hungry dogs, and were prepared for any form of robbery. No one

went about unarmed in Zanzibar and at night every door and shutter was barred against marauders in the deserted streets.

Domestic slaves, on the other hand—those who had been born or trained in Zanzibar and were more or less civilized—presented other problems. They were the laziest, most dishonest of servants; yet their Arab masters could not conceive of life without them. Often such slaves were incorporated into the family and not unkindly treated: if a concubine bore a child by her master it was at once declared free and adopted as a son or a daughter of the house. Yet drunkenness and petty thieving remained the rule among the domestics in most households, and slaves and masters alike were caught in a web of mutual distrust and even hatred.

There were at this time some five thousand Arabs in Zanzibar, and some of them owned as many as two thousand slaves in addition to large plantations of cloves and coconut palms, three-storey wooden houses with fine carved doorways and wardrobes of embroidered gowns and turbans. Together with the Indian dealers, they controlled the ivory trade, owned ocean-going ships, loaned money at fantastic rates of interest and financed expeditions into the interior. But the legitimate seaborne trade was chiefly in the hands of the Americans, who in 1839 were the first foreign nation to set up a consulate in Zanzibar, and then, in diminishing importance, came the British, the Germans and the French. In exchange for the ivory and other products they took away, the foreign traders brought in “merikani”, the coarse American cotton cloth which was an article of barter everywhere in East Africa, firearms and ammunition, coloured beads manufactured in Venice, china, cereals, and a haphazard range of gadgets and machines from the western world.

If we are to take Burton's word, the tiny white community stationed in Zanzibar lived a miserable life. The Europeans were for ever quarrelling among themselves: “All is wearisome monotony: there is no society; no pleasure, no excitement; sporting is forbidden by the treacherous climate and strangers . . . soon lose the habit of riding and walking. Every merchant hopes to leave Zanzibar for ever, as soon as he can realize a certain sum; every agent would persuade his employer to recall him.”

The drinking water of the island was poisonous or at any rate dangerous, venereal disease was endemic, everyone was in danger of contracting cholera and malaria, and doctors were unknown. Consequently, very few white women lived in Zanzibar, most of the residents being “contented with an Abyssinian or Somali girl.”

One required either great fatalism or a great love of money and power to live willingly in this beautiful and exotic place. Even Hamerton, the British agent, the one European who had outlived all the others on the island, was beginning to succumb to ill health. At the time of Burton's and Speke's arrival he had already been for fifteen years at Zanzibar, and to a very large extent the social and political life of the island revolved around him. In an atmosphere remarkable for quarrels and petty jealousies, few of his contemporaries have a word to say against this warm-hearted and genial Irishman. He was the intimate friend and adviser of the Sultan Seyyid Said, who had created this new Arab empire in the Indian Ocean; he smoothed and calmed every crisis that beset the island and he wrote very sensible dispatches to his superiors in India and London. The British consulate under Hamerton became the recognized point of rendezvous among the foreign community, and his hospitality, like his joviality and good spirits, was remarked upon by every visitor to the island.

Hamerton's health had been undermined by malaria and other illnesses, but it was neither fatalism nor money that kept him at Zanzibar. It was rather a sense of duty, perhaps also a feeling that the island and the people in it were now his life. Seyyid Said had died in the previous year and had been succeeded by his third son, Majid, but still Hamerton kept on. Despite his ill health, he invited Burton and Speke to stay at his house, and busied himself with the utmost enthusiasm in launching their expedition.

There was much to do. Caravans setting off for the interior usually counted on being away for a year or two, and all supplies had to be carried on the porters' heads. Burton proposed to take a caravan of one hundred and seventy men, including an armed guard. These were to be recruited partly in Zanzibar and partly on the coast, and were to be under the general direction of the headman or guide, a half-caste Arab named Said bin Salim who was in the employ of the sultan but had been loaned to the expedition. In addition there were two gunbearers, Sidi Bombay and Mwinyi Mabruki, who served more or less in the capacity of noncommissioned officers; two Goan personal servants who cooked for Burton and Speke; and a guard which was made up partly of armed slaves and partly of Baluchis in the sultan's service—about a score of them in all.

For the most part the caravan proposed to live off the country, either by the shooting of wild game or by the purchase of cattle, goats, milk and grain from the tribes. All other supplies (with the

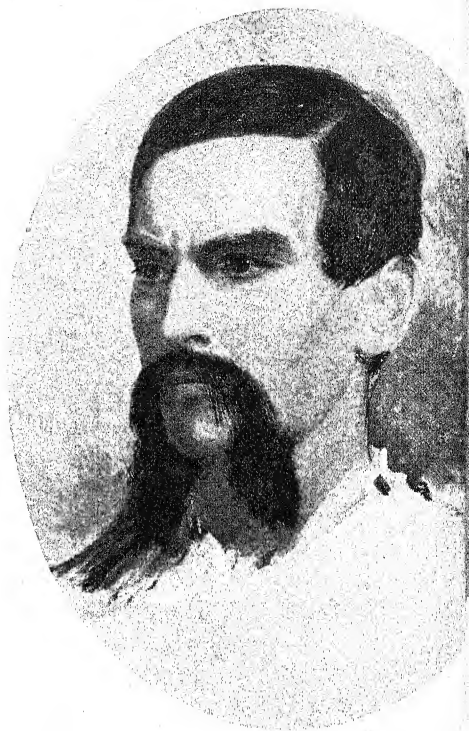
exception of scientific instruments, guns, medicines and so forth which were brought from England or India) had to be obtained from the Indian and Arab merchants in Zanzibar.

As to camp furniture, the two explorers did themselves well. They had a tent, camp beds, a portable table and chairs, blankets, mattresses, mosquito nets, air pillows, a canteen of knives and forks, and cooking utensils. Their clothing consisted of normal shooting jackets, trousers and boots, in addition to turbans and thick felt caps for the head.

There was a small library of scientific books, stationery, sealing wax, ink, a table of the stars, sketching and painting materials, but no camera. They had a carpenter's and a blacksmith's outfit, and other tools with which they hoped to assemble and rig a small portable boat on the lakes. Among the provisions were:

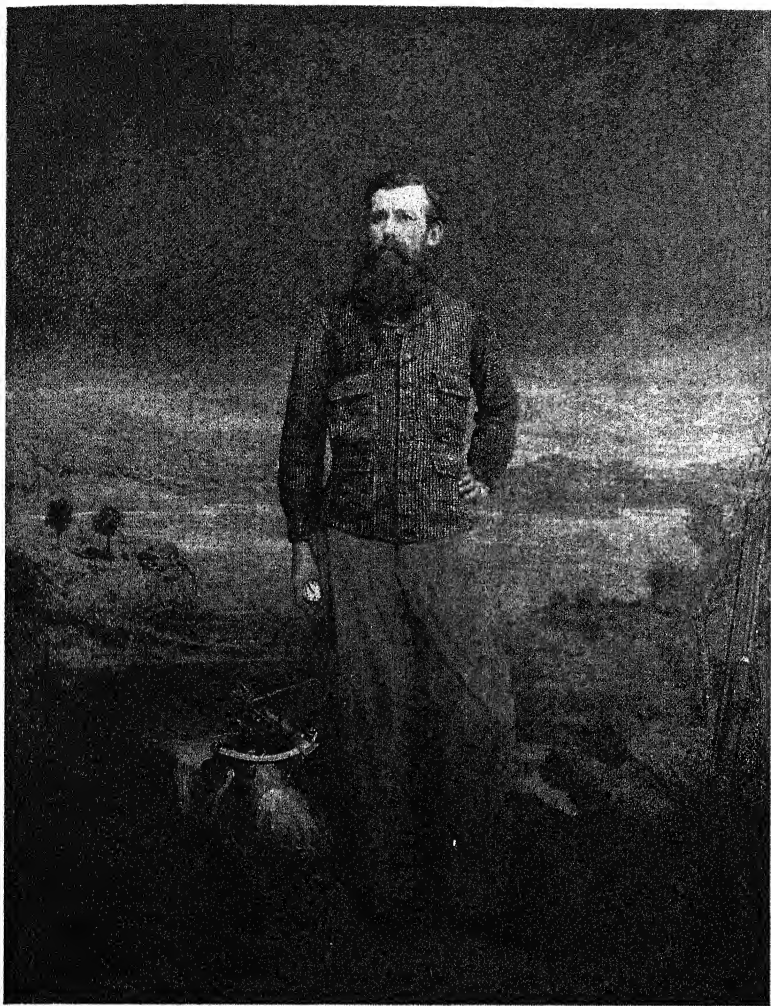
"1 dozen brandy (to be followed by 4 dozen more); 1 box cigars; 5 boxes tea (each 6 lbs.); a little coffee; 2 bottles curry stuff, beside ginger, rock and common salt, red and black pepper, one bottle each, pickles, soap and spices; 20 lbs. pressed vegetables; a bottle vinegar, 2 bottles oil; 20 lbs. sugar (honey is procurable in that country)."

Morphia and quinine were included in the medicine chest, but at this time little was known about malaria—and the success of every expedition depended very largely on the explorers' resistance to the fever. Quinine had long since been discovered, but there was much uncertainty about the size of the correct dose. Burton preferred



Sir Richard Burton.
*"This brilliant, courageous,
highly-strung adventurer."*

John Hanning Speke.
*"Underneath that cool and prosaic exterior
lay a certain charm."*



to place his faith in Warburg's Drops, which were compounded of sloes, quinine and opium, and in this he made an error.

The baggage also included 4 umbrellas, 2,000 fishing hooks and line, 2 lanterns, 2 canisters of snuff, 10 steels and flints, a Union Jack and a large cargo of cloth, brass wire and beads to be used in paying the porters and in trading with the tribes. All these things were either encased in boxes or tightly wrapped in a sort of bolster which could be carried on the porters' heads.

There was one other aspect of the expedition, and it was to play a

vital part in all the unknown hazards that lay ahead. This was the personality of the two explorers themselves.

Burton was a romantic and an Arabist; he belongs to that small perennial group of English men and women who are born with something lacking in their lives; with a hunger, a nostalgia, that can be set at rest only in the deserts of the East. Whatever the reason may have been—whether it was a natural revulsion from the narrow horizons and the wet and cloudy climate of England, or from the constricting Victorian code of manners there—it was the tinkling of the camel bell that beckoned him until the day he died. And yet with all his amazing intelligence he remains an amateur of the Islamic world, a devoted dilettante, more Arab than the Arabs but never absolutely one of them. He returns to the East again and again like a migratory bird, never at peace when he is away, yet never able to stay for long without succumbing to an overmastering restlessness. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt remembers meeting Burton once in Buenos Aires at the end of one of his debauches among the natives, when he reappeared collarless and in filthy clothes. He had, Blunt says, “a countenance the most sinister I have ever seen, dark, cruel, treacherous, with eyes like a wild beast.” Burton’s wife describes him as being five feet eleven inches tall, and muscular, with very dark hair, a weather-beaten complexion, an enormous black moustache, large, black, flashing eyes, long lashes and a fierce, proud, melancholy expression.

Yet beneath all this drama Burton was an intensely fastidious and scholarly man. No one else has chronicled a journey through Africa with such erudition as he has. Nothing is beyond his observation: the languages and customs of the tribes, the geography of the land, its botany, geology and meteorology, even the statistics of the import and export trade at Zanzibar. No other explorer had such a breadth of reference, or had read so much or could write so well; none certainly was graced with such a touch of sardonic humour. His *Lake Regions of Central Africa* remains one of the best explorers’ journals ever written.

At this time he was thirty-six years of age and already a famous man, though not a very popular one. After an education in France and Italy and at Oxford, he had served seven years in the Indian army, had made a journey to Mecca and a second hardly less perilous expedition to the forbidden city of Harar in Abyssinia, and had written books about these adventures. Never at any point in his army career in India had he proceeded in a normal, orthodox way. He was for ever disguising himself in Eastern clothes, even dyeing his

face and hands, and visiting low bazaars which would have been extremely distasteful to the ordinary British officer. In consequence he knew a great deal more about Indians and their way of life than the authorities cared to know. As an officer he was irascible, impatient of discipline and highly critical of his colleagues. Yet he was a swordsman of note, incontestably brave, and in his command of languages and dialects there were few to equal him: at the end of his life he was believed to speak and write no fewer than thirty-nine.

One has the feeling that he lived in a state of continual conflict within himself, the intellectual warring with the man of action, the methodical scholar grating against the poet and the romantic, the fastidious hypochondriac fighting a losing battle with the libertine. But every so often he would recoil from his own unorthodoxy and struggle back to a respectable show of things; and it was in one such recoil that, just before the opening of this new African adventure, he entered into an engagement with the doting and carefully nurtured Isabel Arundell, in England. Having become engaged to her, however, he at once abandoned her—a thing he was to do more than once in the long married life that lay before them—and now he had involved himself in another relationship which was even more singular. That this brilliant, courageous, highly-strung adventurer should have adopted as his close companion a man who was so complete an opposite as John Hanning Speke is, surely, as ironic as the relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

Not that Speke was in any way servile to Burton. Indeed, he was the very reverse, and this in the end was to be Burton's undoing. Burton needed a disciple and instead he got a rival. Speke was some six years younger than Burton, tall and slender, with blue eyes and fair hair; he drank very little and never smoked. His life was in the open air, and to fit himself for that life he was prepared to go to great lengths, sometimes even walking barefoot so as to toughen himself. He planned ahead, he set himself definite objectives and proceeded with great prudence and determination. But underneath that cool and rather prosaic exterior there was a certain charm. Even Burton was prepared to admit this, though his summing up of Speke carried a violent sting in the tail. He wrote: "To a peculiarly quiet and modest aspect—aided by blue eyes and blond hair—to a gentleness of demeanour, and an almost childlike simplicity of manner, he united an immense fund of self-esteem, so carefully concealed, however, that none but his intimates suspected its existence."

Like Burton, Speke had served in the Indian army, and like

Burton, he had a taste for solitary expeditions in India, though of a very different kind; he used to go shooting in the distant Himalayas. Speke had a mania for shooting, and his various journeys on local leave took him into remote places where, possibly, no other European had been before. He was not like his brother officers in India, Speke wrote later, somewhat smugly. He never "idled away his time or got into debt": he was away in the mountains collecting specimens and opening up the unexplored country.

Already, in India, long before he met Burton, Speke had decided that as soon as his long leave fell due he would make a journey through unexplored Africa, travelling from the east coast to the headwaters of the Nile, and then sail downstream to Egypt. On the way he would gather specimens of rare birds and animals, and eventually he would build up a natural-history museum in his father's country house in England. Of his three years' leave from the army, two were to be spent on the journey and the third year he was to recuperate at home. He saved his money, he planned, and in 1854 he sailed for Aden, carrying with him three hundred and ninety pounds' worth of beads and other barter goods with which he proposed to enlist the help of African natives.

It was at this point—some two years before the outset of the present journey—that the two explorers met for the first time. Speke had been in Aden only a few days when Burton turned up with several other young officers on the outward journey of his Abyssinian expedition, and it was soon arranged that Speke should scrap his own plans and join forces with them.

From Burton's point of view this first African adventure had been a distinct personal success. With many manoeuvrings—it was the sort of cloak-and-dagger affair he loved so well—he had first got himself in and out of the fanatical Moslem stronghold of Harar, and had then made a rendezvous with the others on the Somaliland coast. For Speke, however, the expedition had been a disaster. Soon after Burton had joined the coastal party at Berbera in April 1855, a concerted rush had been made on the camp by the local Somali tribesmen at midnight and, in the desperate struggle that had ensued, one of the Englishmen had been killed, Burton had been wounded in the jaw, and Speke, having been repeatedly stabbed about the legs and arms, had been taken prisoner. He was badly wounded, but he managed to escape and rejoin Burton and another of the officers, who had taken refuge aboard a friendly Arab vessel. They eventually arrived at Aden and there took ship for England. One other

Principal Routes of the Victorian Explorers



- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Burton & Speke 1857-9 | ===== |
| Speke (to Lake Victoria) 1858 | ===== |
| Speke & Grant 1860-3 | ===== |
| Baker 1863-4 | ===== |
| Stanley (Livingstone) 1871 | ===== |
| Livingstone (Last journey) 1872-3 | ===== |
| Stanley 1874-7 | ===== |

mortification awaited Speke while he was recovering from his wounds: Burton, as leader of the expedition, considered that he had full rights to the notes taken by his subordinates, and when his *First Footsteps in East Africa* was published it contained an abridged version of Speke's diary tucked away at the end of the book.

After their Somaliland adventure both men had volunteered for the campaign in the Crimea, and when the war was over they had met again in London. Burton was now full of plans for the very kind of journey upon which Speke also had set his heart—an expedition to the sources of the Nile. When Burton asked Speke to join him, Speke immediately agreed.

And so, at the end of 1856, the two men found themselves in Hamerton's house in Zanzibar preparing for their second adventure into the African wilderness. Since Burton had obtained a grant of one thousand pounds from the Foreign Office and the patronage of the Royal Geographical Society, he was the official leader. So far as one can make out, Speke accepted this state of affairs with good grace, and was exhilarated by the prospect that lay before them. Burton, too, was confident. But the explorers were in no particular hurry to get away from Zanzibar, and in this perhaps—in the calm and leisured use of time—one sees by how much we are divided from the nineteenth century. They debated at length about their plans with Hamerton, they called on the young Sultan Majid, they bartered for further men and supplies in the bazaar, and they set off on rather a haphazard preliminary trip along the coast to acclimatize themselves. They were away two months, and when they got back to their boat near Pangani they were so ill with malaria that Burton had to be carried on board. It took them several weeks in Zanzibar to recover. Burton, however, declared that he welcomed this first experience of fever since he believed it would "salt" them against further attacks; and here again he was wrong.

Finally, on June 16, 1857, they set off in the sultan's corvette *Artemuse* for the mainland.

Chapter Two

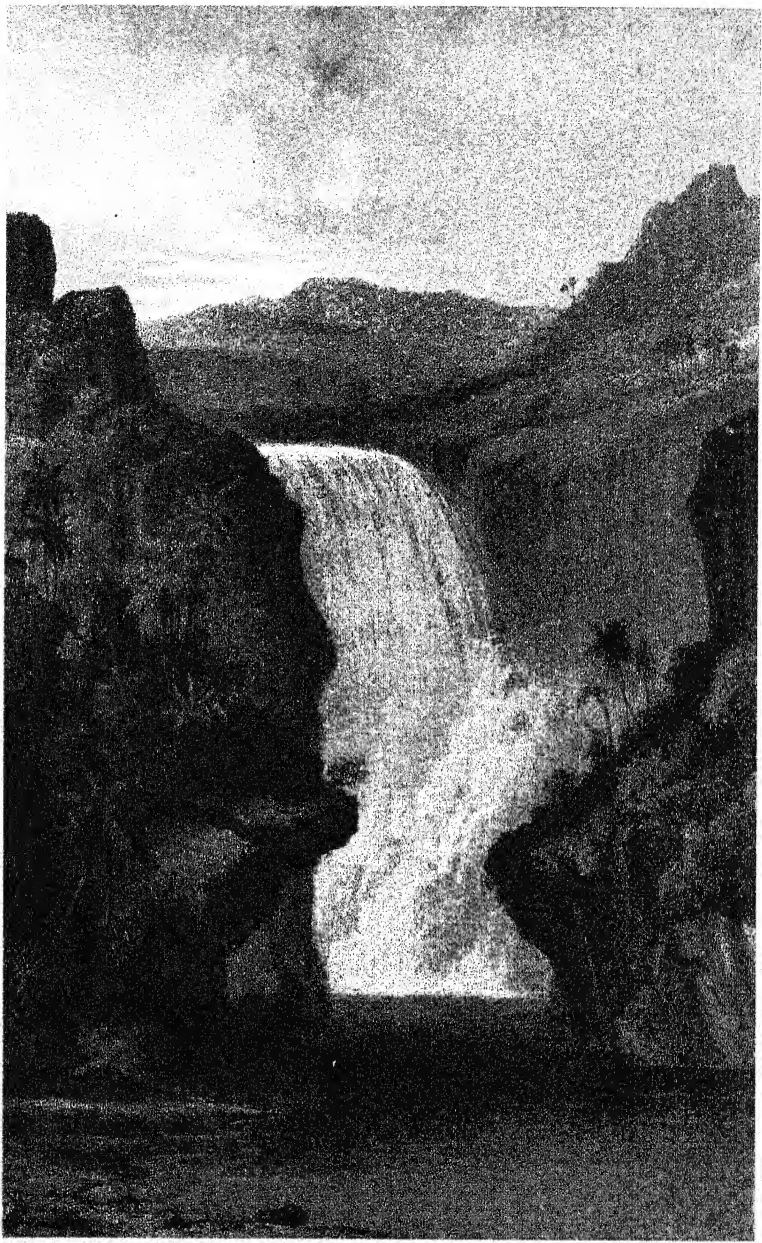
Scarcely twenty miles divide Zanzibar from the African mainland, and on a clear day you can plainly see the island from the coast. A motor launch accomplishes the journey across the straits in an hour or two and by air it is a matter of ten or fifteen minutes. Yet there is

an astonishing difference between the island and the mainland shore. In Zanzibar everything is soft and beguiling; it is as relaxing as a Turkish bath. There are no hills on the island, no harsh cliffs nor torrents; the plantations spread away from the forest paths with the luxuriance of a hothouse, and everywhere there is a sense of established ease, of indolence declining into sleep.

It is no less hot on the mainland, but here the wildness of Africa and the forbidding sensation of vast primitive space touch the traveller directly he steps ashore. He sees a dry hard scrub reaching away into the distance, and flat-roofed native huts made of crude wooden poles and plastered mud; the only really arresting sight in the landscape is the baobab trees, standing in groups like round wooden tubs with antlers for branches. So the maritime plain continues inland for ninety miles until the mountains break into view. Then one mounts up very quickly onto the great central plateau that stretches away for hundreds of miles into the heart of Africa. Now suddenly one realizes how the woolly air of the coast pressed against one's lungs. At three thousand feet, wide plains begin to appear, broken here and there with rough outcrops of rock, and there is never a moment when some distant mountain is not in sight. Occasionally one sees a troop of ostriches in the long grass, or a herd of antelopes on the run, but in the remoter parts there is a deep silence in the bush.

In those days the slave route from the coast led on from one watering place to another, and almost all the caravans headed for Kazeh (now called Tabora) in Central Tanganyika, some five hundred miles inland from the sea. From Kazeh the paths of the caravans struck out in all directions, one directly north towards the southern shore of Lake Victoria, another round the western side of the lake towards the country known as Karagwe, another due westwards to Lake Tanganyika, and still another southwards towards Lake Nyasa. Progress was extremely slow and possible only in dry weather.

There was, however, a moment of respite at the outset of these long journeys, when travellers crossed from Zanzibar to the mainland coast at Bagamoyo. Bagamoyo means "Lay down the burden of your heart", and it is a beautiful place, with a line of rustling coconut palms on the shore and beyond them, at the right season, one of the loveliest sights of Africa: the flamboyant trees that spread like chestnuts and blaze with the brightest shades of scarlet, flame and orange. There is no harbour, but a coral reef breaks the force of the



The Murchison Falls.

waves and the beach slopes very gently inland. A plaque announces that it was from here that Burton and Speke started their journey inland in 1857.

There were of course the usual difficulties in setting out. Having come ashore from their corvette, they discovered that only a few of the porters they wanted were obtainable and consequently asses had to be bought instead. Great haggling took place in the bazaar before thirty-six men were eventually assembled, and it was decided in the end that the portable boat and other heavy baggage would have to be left behind. Hamerton had come over from Zanzibar with the two explorers, to say goodbye and to help them get away, and it was an act of singular devotion, for he was now very ill. He confided to Burton that he expected death and welcomed it and wished to be buried at sea. On June 26, 1857, he sailed away, and he survived only a few days after his return to Zanzibar. Eleven months were to elapse before Burton and Speke were to hear in the depths of the interior that he was dead.

Speke went ahead with some of the men on June 25 on the first stage of the journey, and on June 27 Burton followed him, mounted on a camel. They marched southwestwards at first so as to avoid the country of the hostile Masai tribe to the north, and there was a pause at a place called Zungomero (since vanished from the map) while they regrouped. More porters were obtained, bringing up the numbers of the caravan to one hundred and thirty-two in all, and early August found them climbing slowly up the escarpment to the central plateau.

There was no particular difficulty about the route: they followed beaten paths from one village to another, and from time to time they passed other caravans coming down to the coast with slaves and ivory. Yet it was a slow and tortuous progress. The day began at 4:00 am with the crowing of the cocks, while it was still dark and very cold. Then Burton and Speke had their coffee or tea and perhaps a plate of porridge, while the Arab guard turned to the east for morning prayers. By 5:00 am the whole caravan was stirring round the campfires, and a long delay ensued while the cattle and the goats were rounded up and the porters quarrelled fiercely over their loads, the weaker men usually being left to take up the heavier burdens. The last act before the departure was to set fire to the grass huts that had been built the night before. The huts, of course, might have been useful for other travellers, but one left no gifts for strangers in this hostile world.

There was a rough order in the long procession when it finally got under way. In the lead went the guide, wearing a ceremonial headdress and carrying the red flag of the sultan of Zanzibar, and behind him marched the drummer. The cloth and bead porters came next with their bolster-like bundles on their heads, then the men carrying the camp equipment, and their women, children and cattle. The armed guard was dispersed along the line, each man carrying a muzzle-loaded "Tower-musket", a German cavalry sabre, a small leather box strapped to the waist and a huge cow horn filled with ammunition. Many of them were accompanied by their women and personal slaves. Burton and Speke as a rule drew up the rear, either riding or, if sick, being carried in hammocks. Almost every male member of the caravan had a weapon of some kind, together with an assortment of pots and pans and a three-legged wooden stool strapped to the small of his back. A continuous uproar of chanting, singing, whistling and shouting accompanied the march, for it was thought important to make as much noise as possible so as to impress the local tribes.

The final halt for the day was usually made about eleven o'clock when the full fierceness of the midday heat was beginning, the caravan having then covered about ten miles. If they chanced to stop in a village, a rush was made to occupy the best huts, and while a tent was erected for Burton and Speke the whole caravan was gathered inside a kraal of branches and thorns. Through the midday hours the two explorers sat in the shade, writing their diaries, making sketches and conducting the general business of the march. Cloth was issued to the porters at each halt so that they could purchase grain from the local inhabitants. At 4:00 pm the Goanese cooks served dinner, which consisted of some such dish as rice and goat's meat, unless Speke had gone out and bagged a partridge or a gazelle—a diversion that Burton did not encourage: "Captain Burton," Speke wrote later, "being no sportsman, would not stop for shooting."

At night, especially if the moon was shining, the dancing began, the women in one group, the men in another. "They keep such perfect time," Burton wrote, "a hundred pairs of heels sound like one." But then as the excitement of the dance increased, bedlam would break out, and confused rushings and screamings would fill the camp, until at last, towards eight o'clock, the dancers subsided exhausted around their fires and all was peace at last.

Such might have been a normal day in the caravan's progress, but then hardly any day was normal. At every stage the local chieftains

demanded their *hongo*—a tax of so many yards of cloth, so many bags of beads—before they would allow the strangers to cross their territory. Hours, sometimes days, would go by before the haggling was over, and at last a drum was beaten in the chieftain's village to announce that the caravan was free to proceed. As they got further away from the coast many of the porters deserted and had to be replaced by new ones; the asses died one after another, and disease kept breaking out in the camp. Often they were hungry to the point of half starvation, and both white men were constantly ill. Often too they were swamped by unseasonable rain. But still they struggled on.

In the late eighteen-fifties, the Tanganyika tribes were probably not so disturbed and brutalized as they became later on when the slave trade grew worse. The traveller was given a relatively friendly reception; and since Burton's and Speke's were the first white skins ever to be seen in these regions they were the victims of "an ecstasy of curiosity". Natives were constantly standing in a ring round them, pressing into their tent and reaching out their hands to touch them. Burton expostulated: "At last my experience in staring enabled me to categorize the infliction as follows: Firstly is the stare furtive, when the starrer would peep and peer under the tent, and its reverse, the open stare. Thirdly is the stare curious or intelligent, which generally was accompanied with irreverent laughter regarding our appearance. Fourthly is the stare stupid, which denoted the hebetate incurious savage. The stare discreet is that of sultans and great men; the stare indiscreet at unusual seasons is affected by women and children. Sixthly is the stare flattering—it was exceedingly rare, and equally so was the stare contemptuous. Eighthly is the stare greedy; it was denoted by the eyes restlessly bounding from one object to another, never tired, never satisfied. Ninthly is the stare peremptory and pertinacious, peculiar to crabbed age. The dozen concludes with the stare drunken, the stare fierce or pugnacious, and finally the stare cannibal, which apparently considered us as articles of diet."

For a man so immersed in the study of coloured races and so avid for travel among them, Burton reveals an odd and contradictory contempt for the African. His religion, Burton says, is nothing but a "vague and nameless awe", his chief preoccupation drunkenness. He records that everywhere the drinking of *pombe*, the native beer, starts with the dawn and continues all through the day and that these befuddled people have no code of morals: "Marriage, which is an epoch amongst Christians, an event among the Moslems, is with these people an incident of frequent occurrence. Polygamy is

unlimited and the chiefs pride themselves upon the number of their wives, varying from twelve to three hundred." Burton's tirade against the Africans goes on, and hardly for a moment does he pause to reflect that it was the foreign slavers who were debauching and degrading these people quite as much as the *pombe* and the polygamy.

When at last the party straggled into Kazeh on November 7, 1857, Burton went forward to meet the Arab traders there with joy. He was back with his own kind again, grave, courteous, bearded men in turbans and long white robes, cultivated men with graceful manners, and he seems undisturbed by the fact that their principal preoccupation was the herding of men, women and children down to the coast towards the slave markets of Mombasa and Zanzibar.

There were about twenty-five Arab dealers living in Kazeh at this time. Their houses, though built of mud, were quite extensive buildings enclosing a central courtyard, with separate rooms for the domestic slaves and the harem. Fruit, vegetables and rice had been planted and in the bazaar most articles essential to East African trade were on sale. Hardly any of the Arabs were healthy for two months together, and life can scarcely have been much more than a dreary round of petty bargaining and interminable waiting. They were delighted to see the two white men from the coast and were ready to help them in every way. And so a month went by at Kazeh, Burton conversing with his hosts about the unknown country that lay before them to the west. Speke, one feels, being ill and unable to speak Arabic, was left a little in the cold.

Early in December, however, they set off again, and on February 13, 1858 reached Lake Tanganyika in the neighbourhood of the Arab slaving and ivory post at Ujiji. This was a moment of great triumph, a major discovery. Both men were seriously ill again—Speke, who had suffered since childhood from ophthalmia, was so blind he could barely see the lake, and Burton, with an ulcerated jaw, could take nothing but liquid food—but at least the expedition had accomplished the first of its great objects. When Speke recovered his eyesight both men set off towards the north, with two native canoes. It was Burton's notion that they might find a river there which, flowing north, might well be the source of the Nile. But he was disappointed: the Rusizi flows southwards into Lake Tanganyika, which is only 2,535 feet above sea level and therefore too low to be the origin of the Nile. "I felt sick at heart," Burton wrote. They turned back to Ujiji, and here at last a little good

fortune came to them: their rearguard arrived with supplies from the coast, and after nearly a year they received letters giving them news of the outside world. In June 1858 they were back at Kazeh again.

And here there occurred the beginning of a chain of incidents which was to set this journey apart from all others in Central Africa, and lead on through endless bitterness and tragedy to the solution of the problem of the Nile. Burton was anxious to pause awhile among his Arab friends in Kazeh so as to refit the caravan and compile his notes upon the discoveries they had already made. Speke wanted to go off and investigate reports they had heard from the Arabs of the Nyanza, a lake larger than the Tanganyika, which was said to lie some three weeks' journey to the north of Kazeh. Burton willingly let him go. With the gunbearer Sidi Bombay and a small party of porters and Baluchi guards, Speke set off on July 9, 1858.

The traveller today will find that the region between Kazeh and Lake Victoria is, at first, anything but spectacular; the eternal scrub presses monotonously around one, mile after mile. But scrub thins out and wide refreshing plains begin to sweep away to the horizon. Here and there huge rounded granite boulders rise up grotesquely from the ground. One touch of rain on this countryside and it sprouts a lawn of grass. A myriad of storks and other birds alight on the swamps and waterholes, and there is a change in the air, a feeling, as you move along, that you are approaching a frontier of some kind, a new experience. As you approach the lake, the earth grows greener, the air more humid, and soon you are surrounded by shady trees, palms, emerald-green mangoes and flamboyants. Finally, near Mwanza, the lake itself breaks into view, more like a sea than a lake, with sand beaches and wooded slopes coming down to the shore. To the north there is no visible end to the vast sheet of water. Occasionally it is ruffled up by tremendous storms with black clouds overhead, but on a normal day a light breeze blows and white horses splash up casually on the shore. The water is blue in the



*Sidi Bombay,
the faithful gunbearer.*

sunshine, grey on a cloudy day, and during the sunsets both sky and lake glow together in a magnificent explosion of theatrical light. For all its beauty, there is a mysterious and disturbing atmosphere about the lake, and when the lakeside Africans begin to beat their drums one feels here very strongly the primitiveness of Africa.

All these things—the surrounding plains, the peoples of the lakeside, and the immense mysterious reaches of the lake itself—were outside the range of civilized knowledge when Speke began his march. It is, then, hardly surprising that he should have been greatly excited in the early morning of August 3, 1858, when he stood on the shore near Mwanza and saw the immense stretch of water for the first time. "I no longer felt any doubt," he wrote later, "that the lake at my feet gave birth to that interesting river, the source of which has been the subject of so much speculation, and the object of so many explorers. The Arabs' tale was proved to the letter. This is a far more extensive lake than the Tanganyika, so broad that you could not see across it, and so long that nobody knew its length."

It was a reckless conclusion to jump to, and it was quite impossible for Speke to back it up with any scientific proof. Yet he seems to have been genuinely convinced by this one short view of a tiny section of the southern shore—he stayed only three days on the lake—that he had discovered the source of the Nile. He hastened back to Kazeh and at once acquainted Burton with his discovery. His conviction was strong; but his reasons were weak.

"After a few days," wrote Burton, "it became evident to me that not a word could be uttered on the subject of the lake, the Nile, and his *trouvaille* generally without offence. By tacit agreement it was, therefore, avoided."

Speke's version of the matter is as follows: "Captain Burton greeted me on arrival at the old house . . . I . . . expressed my regret that he did not accompany me as I felt quite certain I had discovered the source of the Nile. This he naturally objected to, even after hearing all my reasons for saying so, and therefore the subject was dropped. Nevertheless the captain accepted all my geography leading from Kazeh to the lake, and wrote it down in his book—contracting only my distances, which he said he thought were exaggerated, and of course taking care to sever my lake from the Nile by *his* Mountains of the Moon."

They had already fallen out over the Mountains of the Moon. Burton wanted to have them in one place on the map, Speke in another, and it was a vital point, since these mountains, wherever

they were, most probably provided the first drainage for the river. So now, like an old hand at chess, Burton neatly checkmated his opponent by dropping the mountains onto a point of the map where they stood squarely between the river and the lake.

Burton himself had an idea that the sources of the Nile lay further to the east in the vicinity of Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro. At the same time he was not altogether satisfied that the Tanganyika basin should be disqualified. The most he would allow for Speke's new lake (which was now named Victoria in honour of the Queen) was that it might be a feeder to the Upper Nile.

But Burton was not adamant about any of this. He simply wished to make it clear that Speke had no grounds whatever for his sweeping assertions; it was all guesswork. Therefore in Burton's opinion it was much better, in their report to the Royal Geographical Society, to stick to the ground they had thoroughly investigated together, namely the Tanganyika region, and to the reports they had heard from the more reliable Arabs; and in fact while Speke had been away Burton had obtained from the dealers in Kazeh some sound information about the district of Karagwe to the west of Lake Victoria, and even about Buganda and Bunyoro which lay off the map much further to the north.

And so, from this time forward, we find Burton concentrating more and more upon Lake Tanganyika and Speke upon Lake Victoria; each adopted his own lake and was determined to support it against all arguments. Their quarrel may seem futile, but one has to remember that the two men had now been closeted together in the most hazardous circumstances for well over a year, and had long since begun to get on one another's nerves. Also, this issue was almost their whole world at that moment, and it seemed to them to be of the most pressing importance.

"He [Burton]," Speke wrote later to the secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, "used to snub me so unpleasantly when talking about anything that I often kept my own counsel. B. is one of those men who never *can* be wrong, and will never acknowledge an error so that when only we two are together talking becomes more of a bore than a pleasure."

It cannot then have been a very congenial party that set off at the end of September 1858 on the long return journey to the coast. There were one hundred and fifty-two in the caravan now, including slaves, women and children, and many of them, having already marched one thousand five hundred miles or more since leaving

Bagamoyo, were worn out. Burton and Speke collapsed almost at once and had to be carried. Speke appears to have been suffering from pleurisy and pneumonia, and soon it was impossible for him to continue. At the height of his delirium he raved and screamed at Burton, remembering every petty, pent-up grievance. These spasms passed at length and the expedition dragged itself on, beset by sickness and desertions. Four months elapsed before they sighted the Indian Ocean at last, just north of the present town of Dar-es-Salaam. It was now February 1859, and on March 4 they finally reached Zanzibar.

Here everything was in turmoil; some ten thousand deaths through cholera had already occurred in the city, and the sultan was preparing to resist an invasion which was about to be launched upon the island by his brother in Oman. The new British consul, Captain Christopher Rigby, was an old rival of Burton's—both of them being remarkable linguists, they had competed against one another in interpreters' examinations in India—and Burton lost no time in falling out with him. The main conflict between them concerned itself with Burton's failure to pay his porters all the money they expected, and when, later on, they complained at the consulate, both Rigby and Speke, to Burton's fury, supported them.

Burton was at the end of his tether. Those who saw him at this time describe him as wild eyed and so gaunt and emaciated that the flesh hung in hollows on his cheeks; he himself says that the "excitement of travel was succeeded by utter depression of mind and body." He read French novels, avoided meeting people in Zanzibar and developed his hatred of Rigby. After barely three weeks on the island he embarked with Speke on the barque *Dragon of Salem* and they arrived at Aden twenty-five days later.

As yet there was no open breach between the two men. "Still we were," Burton says, "to all appearances friends." But Speke was recovering fast and was anxious to get home. It was agreed that while Burton continued his convalescence a little longer at Aden, Speke should go ahead, and in mid-April he took passage in HMS *Furious*. According to Burton, Speke's last words before he embarked were a promise that he would await his companion's arrival in London before revealing the results of the expedition.

When Burton himself reached England on May 21 Speke had already been there for twelve days and had made good use of his time. On disembarking, he had gone directly to Sir Roderick Murchison, the president of the Royal Geographical Society, and

revealed to him the story of the expedition and his great conviction about the source of the Nile. Murchison was intrigued, and Speke was asked to give an address to members of the society at Burlington House; and here again he pressed his views. Within a week of his arrival word got around London that this intrepid and modest young man had made a discovery of extraordinary importance, and he was invited by the society to go out to Africa again at the head of a new expedition. A sum of two thousand five hundred pounds was quickly raised to finance it, and Speke was soon at work on his plans; he proposed to strike inland again from Zanzibar and then work his way up the western side of the inland sea he had discovered. On its northern coast he hoped to find its outlet, which would be the source of the Nile, and then he would follow this stream northwards until he emerged at last in Egypt. In effect, Speke proposed to march straight through the blank space on the map in Central Africa, and at one stroke settle the immemorial problems of the inland lakes, the Mountains of the Moon and the fountains of the Nile. There was much enthusiasm in London for the new expedition.

Burton meanwhile, a lean and haggard figure, landed in England to find that he had been almost forgotten. The public was only mildly interested in his careful and scientific report on Lake Tanganyika, and he was not invited to take part in the new expedition; he was replaced by another Indian army officer, Captain James Augustus Grant. Five years were to elapse before he was to have his full and terrible revenge.

Chapter Three

There are no written records of Uganda—the territory that Speke now proposed to enter—before the middle of the nineteenth century. It seems certain, however, that at some point in the unrecorded past a superior race of cattle-owning men came south from the Ethiopian highlands and set themselves up as a ruling aristocracy among the negroes on the northern and western borders of Lake Victoria. By 1860 three separate kingdoms were established, Bunyoro in the north, Buganda in the centre and Karagwe to the south, on the western shore of the lake. Many other tribal formations existed as well, but these three little states had a certain coherence in the midst of a wilderness of utter barbarity; and the outside world knew hardly anything about them. A single Arab trader named Ahmed bin

Ibrahim had penetrated into Buganda in the eighteen-forties, and a few others had reached Karagwe, but no white man had ever been there; no notion of other worlds and other ways of life disturbed the inhabitants.

Normally in Central Africa such people remained in a state of arrested development: their villages stayed chained to the Stone Age,



Natives brewing pombe. From a sketch by Grant.

and from century to century life revolved in an endless cycle of crude customs and traditions. But these three puppet kingdoms advanced marvellously. Without any outside help they had achieved by the middle of the nineteenth century a native culture which was well in advance of any other south of the Sahara.

Their houses, for example, were large, beautifully made conical structures of tightly woven canes and reeds, that often soared fifty feet into the air. They were dry and comfortable in the rain, and cool in the hot seasons. The musical instruments of the tribesmen—their drums, harps and trumpets—were equally remarkable, and they travelled on the lake in immense canoes, some of them seventy feet in length. Their basketware was so finely woven it would hold water, and they had discovered the art of making a soft and durable cloth from the bark of trees.

No man attended the court of his king unclothed: he wore sandals on his feet, his body was completely covered by a long and graceful toga, and sometimes this was surmounted by a beautifully made cape

of antelope skins. Neither men nor women disfigured their bodies with scars or tattoos like the other Central African tribes, and when they sat down to eat they washed their hands, either by squeezing a wet napkin or by pouring water over them from a jug. Domestic slaves, who were treated as part of the household, served the meal, and the food was distinctly civilized: a kind of gruel made from coarse bananas; fish and meat stews; chickens, sweet potatoes, maize and wild sugarcane. Coffee beans were chewed as a digestive and they brewed their beer from bananas. Both men and women smoked.

In Buganda especially, the richest and most progressive of the three states, the power of the king was absolute, but he was advised by a group of counsellors who formed a kind of cabinet in which each man had some special duty. Thus there was the vizier or prime minister, the treasurer, the commander-in-chief of the army and the admiral of the fleet of war canoes on the lake, the chief executioner, and others with more picturesque titles such as the chief brewer and the keeper of the drums. These men, together with the provincial chiefs, were obliged to be in constant attendance on the king in his court. Here the etiquette was elaborate. No man could sit down in the king's presence, be incorrectly dressed, or speak without permission. Whenever the king appeared the courtiers abased themselves on the ground before him, since he was believed to personify the spirit of the race.

And yet these people had no method of writing or counting, no means of measuring the passage of time, no mechanical contrivances even as simple as the plough or the wheel, no religion but the most primitive kind of superstition and witchcraft. They gave way to their passions and their appetites like spoiled and delinquent children, and they were unbelievably cruel. It was common practice for both men and women to drink themselves into a stupor.

There were strong differences between the three kingdoms, and perhaps these differences were conditioned by the geographical nature of the country. Bunyoro, to the north, is drier and harsher than the land around the shores of Lake Victoria, and for months at a time no rain falls on the miles of dry, hard scrub. The people here were less sophisticated than the lakeside inhabitants, but more warlike and aggressive, and these qualities were certainly reflected in their king, Kamrasi. He was both harsh and suspicious, a chieftain with the instincts of a pirate, and the absorbing hatred of his life was directed partly against Buganda in the south, and partly against a rebellious brother called Rionga, who lived on an island in the Nile.

Karagwe, on the western side of the lake, is more open country, much of it five thousand feet above sea level, and there is a remarkable freshness and clarity in the landscape. In those days large herds of cattle grazed across the grassy plains, and thousands of elephants, giraffes, buffaloes, antelopes and rhinoceroses roamed about. Here, at a place called Bweranyange, King Rumanika kept his little provincial court. He was a large and friendly man, hospitable to strangers. Being the weakest of the three kings, Rumanika took care to remain on good terms with the rulers of Bunyoro and Buganda. Yet he too had his eccentricities. He kept an extraordinary harem of wives who were so fat they could not stand upright, and instead grovelled like seals about the floors of their huts. Their diet was an uninterrupted flow of milk that was sucked from a gourd through a straw, and if the young girls resisted this treatment they were force-fed like the *pâté de foie gras* geese of Strasbourg: a man stood over them with a whip.

Buganda, on the northern shore of the lake, has neither the dryness of Bunyoro nor the horizons of Karagwe, it is a region of jungles and broken hills. The climate is hot, changeable and damp, and all things spring from the earth in a blaze of exotic colour. The earth itself is red, the plantations of bananas make avenues that are filled with warm light and the surrounding jungle is a vast aviary filled with tropical birds and flowering shrubs. These conditions create an impression of intimacy, of quickness and liveliness and of a kind of luxurious excitement, and that is the nature of the Buganda.

In 1860 Mutesa, the young king of Buganda, had established his capital a few miles inland from the lake on a hilltop which is not far from the modern city of Kampala. The traveller came into the town on a broad earthen road cut through the jungle and saw, scattered about the hillsides, a settlement of gracefully proportioned round huts with crowds of people moving about between them. The women for the most part went naked or wore a short cloth around their waists, and the men wore togas.

Mutesa's court was a compound of especially spacious huts in the centre of the town, and here he held his daily levees, sitting upon a platform of grass covered with a red blanket, and surrounded by his nobles, his pages and his wives, who numbered a couple of hundred or so. At this time he was a slim, well-built young man in his early twenties with beautiful teeth and liquid, rather striking, eyes. His tonsured hair was built up like a cockscomb on his head, his toga was neatly knotted over one shoulder, and on his arms and legs he wore



*Speke presents the heads of three white rhinoceroses
to Rumanika, King of Karagwe.*

broad bands of coloured beads. At his feet were his symbols of royalty, a spear, a shield and a white dog. When he went walking the whole court followed, and he affected an extraordinary stiff-legged strut which was meant to imitate the gait of a lion. In the manner of Queen Victoria he did not look round when he chose to sit down; a chair was automatically placed in readiness for him, except that in his case it was a page, crouching on his hands and knees. When he chose to speak the courtiers listened in a strained and respectful silence and then, in a body, threw themselves on the ground, uttering over and over again a curious cry that sounded like "n'yanzig", and was meant to indicate both gratitude and the deepest humility. Mutesa, in short, was a very impressive figure, and there might even have been a certain dignity about him had it not been for the fact that he was monstrously savage and bloodthirsty.

Hardly a day went by without some victim being executed at his command, and this was done wilfully, casually, almost as a kind of game. A girl would commit some breach of etiquette by talking too loudly, a page would neglect to close or open a door, and at once, at a sign from Mutesa, they would be taken away, screaming, to have their heads lopped off. Torture by burning alive, the mutilation of victims by cutting off their hands, ears and feet, the burial of living wives with their dead husbands—all these things were taken as a matter of course. Mutesa crushed out life in the same way as a child will step on an insect, never experiencing a moment's pity for the pain he was inflicting.

To be fair, it has to be recorded that all Mutesa's ancestors had behaved in exactly the same way, and a similar law of the jungle prevailed in all the minor tribal groups. Unless the ruler surrounded himself with an atmosphere of dread and superstitious awe he did not stay very long on his throne. Mutesa, on becoming king, had instantly put to death some sixty of his brothers by burning them alive, and this was apparently regarded as a perfectly normal precaution against rebellion.

This, then, was the strange little island of native civilization that had been left undisturbed to work out its own destiny in the heart of Central Africa. There was no real enlightenment here. On the other hand, these people were still insulated from the abuses of civilization: there was no syphilis or smallpox, no rinderpest to kill their cattle. They had plenty to eat and drink, and only the barest echoes of other things reached them from the outside world—of the slavers coming up the Nile from Egypt and the Arab caravans from Zanzibar. Perhaps it really was a Garden of Eden of a kind, savage but fatalistic; at all events, it was still intact when Speke and his new companion Grant marched into Karagwe in November of 1861.

The two explorers had taken over a year to get inland from Zanzibar. All their men save a few like the gunbearers Bombay and Mabruki had deserted, the local chieftains on the way had ferociously demanded their *hongo*, their goats and cattle had been stolen, and Grant had gone down with malaria. They had even failed as yet to catch a glimpse of Lake Victoria.

But in Grant, Speke had found an ideal companion. The two men were of the same age and had been friends in India, where they had often gone on shooting excursions together. Grant was the perfect lieutenant, the most self-effacing man who ever entered the turmoil of African exploration; he never puts himself forward, he never complains, never questions any order of his leader. His devotion to Speke was almost doglike. "Not a shade of jealousy or distrust or even ill-temper," he said, "ever came between us." Speke he describes as "above every littleness". Possibly Grant was something of a bore, but it would be foolish to regard him as a colourless nonentity. He was a cool and very steady man, a soldier and a sportsman well out of the ordinary, and in his modest way he was a competent artist and a genuine amateur of botany.

Rumanika was delighted to meet the two white men, the first he had ever seen. He shook hands warmly, addressed them in good Swahili, and established them in his best huts with an abundant

supply of provisions. Speke had a pleasant month at Bweranyange. He exchanged presents with Rumanika, drank his *pombe*, and with a tape measure ascertained the dimensions of his fat wives. He also did great execution among the rhinoceroses with his gun.

Rumanika warned Speke that he must not proceed into Buganda until Mutesa sent for him, and so messengers were sent off to warn Mutesa of the expedition's approach; and while they waited the month of December slipped by.

Grant meanwhile was assailed by a dreadful sore on his leg, and the infection became so painful he was unable to stir from his hut. Certainly he was in no condition to walk or even to be carried when, on January 8, 1862, a troop of messengers arrived from Mutesa bearing an invitation for the expedition to proceed. It was therefore decided that he should remain behind in Rumanika's care while Speke went forward alone. For the next three months Grant remained a prisoner in his hut, unable to go out, often in agony and without news of any kind.

It took Speke six weeks to walk to Mutesa's court, and in the course of the journey he at last came within sight of Lake Victoria, opposite the Sese Islands. More than ever now he felt that his original conjecture had been correct: the lake was a vast inland sea and somewhere on its northern shore he would find its outlet to the north—the fountains of the Nile. For the moment, however, he was forced to put his geographical work aside and prepare himself for his reception by Mutesa.

He tells us that on his arrival he unpacked his best suit, dressed his men in red blankets and, with a handsome collection of gifts, got ready to present himself at the palace. But rain fell and in the best manner of royal garden parties the reception was put off until the following day. On February 20, 1862, he set forth again, flanked by his red-blanketed bodyguard, with the Union Jack leading the way, only to find himself out-faced by a rival delegation which was given precedence; Speke was told to wait in the hot sun outside the palace. He stood it for five minutes and then in a fury turned round and walked back to his own hut a mile away. The courtiers who were conducting him to the king watched his retirement with consternation—evidently such a thing had never happened before—and presently they came running to say that it was all a mistake; the king would see him at once and he would be allowed to bring his own chair to sit on, an unheard-of privilege.

When Speke got back to the palace, a band playing five-stringed



Mutesa, King of Buganda.

"A very impressive figure . . . monstrously savage and bloodthirsty."

harp and trumpets ushered him through the outer courts into the presence of the monarch. Speke set up his chair in front of the throne, erected his umbrella and awaited events. Nothing happened. For an hour the two men sat gazing at one another, Mutesa occasionally turning to his courtiers to pass a remark on the umbrella, on the bodyguard or on Speke himself. From time to time a draught of beer

At length a man came with a message: had he seen the king?

"Yes," Speke answered, "for fully one hour."

When this was translated to Mutesa, he rose and walked away into the interior of his palace on the tips of his toes in his imitation of a lion. There now ensued a long wait while the king ate his dinner: as an act of courtesy, it was explained to Speke, Mutesa had refrained from eating until the meeting had taken place. Finally, at the end of the day, when they met again by the light of torches, Speke offered his presents: several rifles and guns together with ammunition, a gold watch, a telescope, an iron chair, beads, silk cloths and knives, spoons and forks. Mutesa in return sent him a gift of cattle, goats, fish, fowls, porcupines and rats, all of which apparently were regarded as suitable items of diet.

At a further interview Speke was invited to display the magic of his pistols by taking a potshot at four cows, a feat he accomplished a little awkwardly. One of the cows, charging upon him, required a second bullet before it was dispatched.

"The king," Speke says, "now loaded one of the carbines I had given him with his own hands, and giving it full-cock to a page, told him to go out and shoot a man in the outer court: which was no sooner accomplished than the little urchin returned to announce his success, with a look of glee such as one would see in the face of a boy who had robbed a bird's-nest, caught a trout, or done any other boyish trick. The king said to him, 'And did you do it well?' 'Oh yes, capitally.' There appeared no curiosity to know what individual human being the urchin had deprived of life."

Nothing would keep Mutesa away from his new toys after this. On fine days he would march round his capital, gun in hand, his wives, pages and courtiers following behind and the band playing; and if by luck he managed to hit a vulture on a tree he would be thunderstruck by his own magical powers, and would run forwards crying out "Woh, woh, woh" in infantile excitement.

The women who followed Mutesa about in hordes wherever he went appeared to occupy a privileged position, but it was slavery nonetheless. "Young virgins ..." Speke wrote, "stark naked, and smeared with grease, but holding for decency's sake a small square of *mbugu* (bark cloth) at the upper corners in both hands before them, are presented by their fathers in propitiation for some offence and to fill the harem." From time to time one of these girls would be sent to Speke as a gift, and he parcelled them out as wives among his followers. The queen mother, however, whom Speke describes as

“fair, fat and forty-five”, was a figure of some power in the state and kept her separate court at a little distance from Mutesa’s palace. There drinking, smoking and dancing to the music of her personal band were the usual occupations.

After Speke had been for three months in these bizarre surroundings, Grant finally arrived. He was still limping but otherwise restored to health, and now both men were eager to push on towards their goal. At Mutesa’s court, they heard of a stream that emerged from Lake Victoria only a short distance to the east. The lake was said to pour itself out in a wide fall of water towards the north. Speke determined to make his way to this spot and then follow the river downstream.

It amused Mutesa to have the two white men at his court and he was not altogether sure that he had extracted every possible gift from them. For another six weeks he prevaricated and delayed, and then at last on July 7, 1862, he let them go. The two explorers, with the faithful Sidi Bombay and their caravan, marched out to the east, escorted by a Bugandan bodyguard.

And now occurred one of the strangest incidents of the whole adventure. Their guide had led them somewhat north of the lake, and in order to reach the Nile and trace it to its source it was necessary for the caravan to turn sharply south. A conference was held, and it was decided that the expedition should split: Speke was to go south to the source while Grant turned north and opened up the way to Kamrasi’s court in Bunyoro. One can only take the two men’s word for it that they were entirely agreed upon this arrangement. From Grant we have no hint of reproach or disappointment. He had staked his life on getting to this goal, and now at the last minute he quietly turned away from it in order to please his companion. Grant merely says that he was invited by Speke to make a flying march to the source and was forced to decline since his bad leg made it impossible to manage twenty miles a day. Why it was necessary for Speke to dash off at the rate of twenty miles a day is not explained; but there is much between these two that cannot be understood unless one constantly remembers Grant’s utter devotion to his leader. As with a marriage, a veil falls down between this partnership and the outside world, and no one can presume to know the intricacies of their relationship. Speke, of course, was a man whose whole being was centred upon proving that his theory of the Nile was the right one, and no doubt he was in a state of intense impatience to get to his objective: to have hung about waiting for

Grant to keep up with him would have been intolerable. And so, with an almost feminine resignation, Grant gave way; better to stand in the reflection of Speke's glory than to strain their friendship.

Speke went off with his flying column and reached the Nile on July 21, 1862, at a place called Urondogani about forty miles downstream from the lake: "Here at last I stood on the brink of the Nile; most beautiful was the scene, nothing could surpass it!" The crocodiles, the hippopotami, the herds of hartebeest—it was everything they had imagined, and Speke in his exaltation told his men that "they ought to shave their heads and bathe in the holy river, the cradle of Moses . . ." Bombay soberly replied that, being Mohammedans, "we don't look on these things in the same fanciful manner as you do: we are contented with the commonplaces of life . . ."

They were keen enough, however, when they marched upstream and came within sight of their goal at last on July 28; all forgot their fatigue and rushed forward along the river bank. A hill blocked their view of the lake but there, at their feet, the great stream poured itself like a breaking tidal wave over a waterfall. "It was a sight that attracted one for hours," Speke says, "—the roar of the waters, the thousands of passenger fish leaping at the falls with all their might; the Wasoga and Waganda fishermen coming out in boats and taking post on all the rocks with rod and hook, hippopotami and crocodiles lying sleeping on the water. . . ."

He named the place the Ripon Falls, "after the nobleman who presided over the Royal Geographical Society when my expedition was got up."

It now remained for the explorers to get back to civilization alive to tell the story, and there was no guarantee that they would succeed. A month went by before Speke and Grant joined forces (now reduced to some seventy men and four women) again, and together they marched into Bunyoro, where King Kamrasi received them somewhat sourly; he filched Speke's fifty-guinea gold chronometer from him before he would allow the expedition to proceed. In Bunyoro the explorers heard reports of another large lake a short distance to the west, the Lūta Nzigé, and it seemed possible that this might be a second source of the Nile. But it was now November 1862, and they were worn out and bereft of nearly all their possessions; to have made a further detour might have settled their last chance of survival. They had, however, one bright hope; before leaving London, Speke had arranged with the Royal Geographical Society for an expedition to be sent south from Gondokoro in the Sudan to

meet them with fresh supplies and porters. It was impossible to fix a definite rendezvous in that unmapped country, and Speke and Grant were already a year late in keeping the appointment. But John Petherick, the British vice-consul at Khartoum and the leader of the relief column, was an experienced and reliable man, and the society had provided him with a thousand pounds with which to buy boats and supplies. These were to be sent up the river from Khartoum and stationed at Gondokoro to await Speke's and Grant's arrival.

It was with the prospect of meeting Petherick that the two explorers now pushed on towards the north, toiling slowly through depressing scrub. As they advanced they found that the tribes grew



Grant, Speke and the Queen Mother of Buganda.

increasingly more primitive; they were back in a region of naked, painted men who carried bows and arrows.

At sunset on December 3, welcoming rifle shots were heard in the distance, and presently there advanced to meet them a column of Egyptian and Nubian soldiers dressed in Turkish uniforms. A drum and fife band was playing and red flags waved overhead. This garrison, named Falaro, was the southernmost trading post of the Egyptians on the Upper Nile, and its black commander, Mohammed Wad-el-Mek, came forward to embrace the travellers. He declared that he was the agent of Petherick and of a Maltese trader named de Bono, and that he had orders to convey them to Gondokoro. Soon they were eating a meal of bread, honey and mutton. That night

they slept on genuine bedsteads; but they found soap to be the greatest luxury of all.

They were, however, not quite out of the wood as yet. Mohammed Wad-el-Mek was a dyed-in-the-wool slave driver, and was by no means ready to move north until he had plundered the district of the last available slave and tusk of ivory. It was not until January 10, 1863, that the cavalcade set out, the leaders riding cows and donkeys, the porters carrying tusks, and a disorderly mob of slaves, women, children, goats and cattle following on behind.



*James Augustus Grant.
"The perfect lieutenant."*

On February 13, nearly two years and five months after the outset of their journey, Speke and Grant marched into Gondokoro. There was no sign of Petherick, but presently a wholly unexpected figure came out to meet them. "We saw hurrying towards us," Speke says, "the form of an Englishman . . . my old friend Baker, famed for his sports in Ceylon, seized me by the hand. [They had first met aboard ship when Speke was travelling from India to Aden in 1854.] What joy this was I can hardly tell. We could not talk fast enough, so overwhelmed were we both to meet again."

The sportsman Samuel Baker and his wife had come up the Nile to look for them. The two explorers could relax at last.

"Speke," Baker says, "appeared the more worn of the two: was excessively lean, but in reality he was in good tough condition; he had walked the whole way from Zanzibar, never having once ridden during that wearying march. Grant was in honourable rags; his bare knees projecting through the remnants of trousers that were an exhibition of rough industry in tailor's work. He was looking tired and feverish, but both men had a fire in the eye that showed the spirit that had led them through."

There was much news to give—the death of the prince consort in England, the outbreak of the Civil War in America—but for the moment Speke's and Grant's immediate interest was Petherick.

Where was he? Baker assured them that he was not far away, travelling in the West Nile district, and in fact Petherick and his wife arrived a few days later. Outwardly the little white community appeared friendly, and they dined together. But Speke was furious with Petherick. Nothing would convince him that Petherick, having taken one thousand pounds from the Royal Geographical Society, had not forgotten all about the expedition and instead gone off trading for ivory. In point of fact, Petherick and his wife had spent a dreadful year struggling overland to Gondokoro and had very nearly died. But Speke would not be appeased. When Mrs. Petherick begged him to accept the trade goods and the boat they had brought to Gondokoro for his use, Speke replied acidly that his good friend Baker had supplied him with all his needs and he preferred to go down to Khartoum in Baker's boat. When Speke and Grant sailed north from Gondokoro at the end of February, it was plain that they intended to speak their minds about Petherick when they got back to England; and indeed, they attacked him harshly in their reports to the Royal Geographical Society and in the books they wrote.

With his own men Speke was more generous. Of the original members of the expedition, one had died and one hundred and forty-three porters had deserted, hardly a bad casualty list in the circumstances. At Cairo, where Speke and Grant stayed at Shephard's Hotel, a camp was made in a public park for the remaining twenty-two survivors—eighteen men and four women—and they were feted at a round of public concerts and *tableaux vivants*. Three years' pay was given to each man, and a passage was arranged for them all to Zanzibar, where a further bonus was awaiting them.

On his way down the Nile, Speke had triumphantly cabled to London: "Inform Sir Roderick Murchison that all is well, that we are in latitude 14° 30' upon the Nile, and that the Nile is settled."

But the Nile was not settled. Speke had left too many rivals and enemies in the field for anything to be settled just yet.

Chapter Four

In the Victorian age, explorers' books supplied the drama and the entertainment that now very largely belongs to the documentary cinema and television. Few publications have captured people's imagination like Livingstone's three works on South and Central Africa, or Stanley's accounts of his Congo travels.

These books tended to be intensely personal and were propaganda of a kind. The author pleaded his special cause, often with a note of religious and passionate conviction; he reached out to his reader, stirring up his sympathy and indignation. And since these appeals were interlarded with themes of bravery and high adventure the response was enormous. If he was attacked by jealous rivals, people sprang to his defence; and in the speculative and highly charged arena of African exploration there was a great deal of jealousy.

In the sixties, the great outpouring of these African publications began. Burton's *Lake Regions of Central Africa* appeared in 1860, and in 1863 Speke's *Journal of the Discovery of the Source of the Nile* was shortly followed by his *What Led to the Discovery of the Source of the Nile*. In 1864 Grant published *A Walk Across Africa* (a title suggested to him by Palmerston's remark, "You have had a long walk, Captain Grant"), and Burton collaborated with the geographer James M'Queen on *The Nile Basin*. Then followed the Pethericks' *Travels in Central Africa*, Baker's *Albert N'yanza* and Burton's *Zanzibar*.

Burton, at the opening of his *Lake Regions*, put things in his own drastic fashion:

"I have spoken out my feelings concerning Captain Speke, my companion in the expedition which forms the subject of these pages. During the exploration he acted in a subordinate capacity; and as may be imagined amongst a party of Arabs, Baloch [Baluchis] and Africans, whose languages he ignored, he was unfit for any other but a subordinate capacity. Can I then feel otherwise than indignant when I find that, after preceding me from Aden to England, with a spontaneous offer on his part of not appearing before the society that originated the expedition until my return, he had lost no time in taking measures to secure for himself the right of working the field which I had opened."

This was the first broadside. When it was delivered in 1860 Burton, of course, was smarting from the acclaim which had been given to Speke by the society and its relative coolness towards himself. And now here was Speke in 1863, just back from his new expedition with Grant, and more in the limelight than ever. When the two men landed at Southampton in June the town authorities were there to receive them, together with a group of enthusiastic supporters and friends, including Burton's old rival, Consul Rigby of Zanzibar. On June 22, 1863, the Royal Geographical Society gave Speke an ovation at a special meeting; so great indeed was the crowd which had come to hear the explorer lecture that several windows of

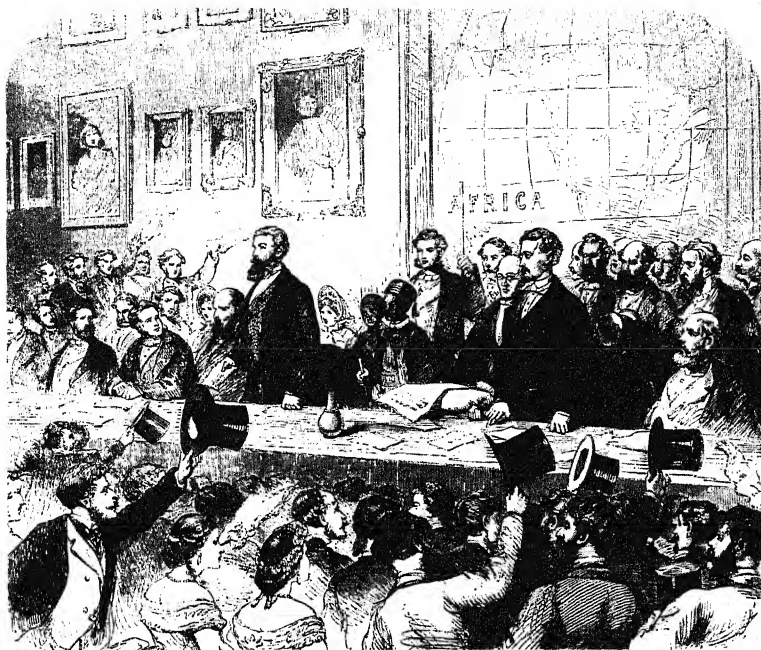
the building were broken. And what had Speke got to say? "The Nile is settled."

To Burton, it was the same old reckless guesswork. What, in fact, had Captain Speke done? He had had a glimpse of a large sheet of water when he had visited Mwanza on the Tanganyika expedition in 1858. He had had another glimpse of another large sheet of water, two hundred miles to the north, when he had visited King Mutesa with Grant in 1862. And at once he had jumped to the conclusion that the vast area between these two points—an area of some thirty thousand square miles—was one immense lake. Had he circumnavigated this so-called lake? Not at all; he had not even bothered to visit its western shore when he was staying with Rumanika. He was entirely unable to say what rivers flowed into it or out of it.

It was quite true that he had found one outlet when he visited a waterfall (the so-called Ripon Falls), and a northward-flowing stream to the east of Mutesa's palace; but what possible excuse had he for declaring that this was the Nile? Had he followed the river downstream from the lake to Gondokoro? By no means. He had marched overland most of the way to Gondokoro, and when by chance on the journey he had caught sight of a river—any river—he had airily concluded that it was the same stream that he had seen issuing from the lake. It was much more likely that he had seen not one stream but several, not one lake but the edges of a series of lakes. Rivers, in any case, did not arise in lakes but in highlands.

There was quite enough logic here to convince other geographers besides Burton that Speke had left far too many questions unanswered, and that the matter of the Nile was not yet settled. Various members began to dispute Speke's conclusions at meetings of the Royal Geographical Society, and this dispute soon spread to the press. Rival camps formed: Grant of course was solidly on his leader's side, and so were others like Rigby who were fired by the young man's zeal and determination. But others again had fallen out with Speke; and so for personal as well as scientific reasons they came down on Burton's side of the fence. The row with Petherick dragged on, and in a speech at Taunton, Speke implied that Petherick, in addition to failing to keep his word, had been engaged in the slave trade. The two explorers had now made an enemy who was every bit as implacable and bitter as Burton.

But soon a much more formidable opponent appeared, the great Dr. Livingstone himself. Like Burton, Livingstone was convinced that the true solution of the origin of the Nile was to be found well



Speke and Grant at the Royal Geographical Society.

south of Lake Victoria and of the Equator. "Poor Speke," he wrote, "has turned his back upon the real sources of the Nile . . . his river at Ripon Falls was not large enough for the Nile."

Eventually, in 1864, a meeting was arranged at Bath of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and both Burton and Speke promised to attend it. They were to meet on the platform on September 16, before an audience of several hundred geographers and scientists and present their rival points of view. Dr. Livingstone was also to be there.

One does not know much about Speke's state of mind prior to the meeting. He must have been aware that Burton was a formidable rival with a command of language and a grasp of logic that he himself did not possess. Burton was an intellectual, Speke was not; and there were some very damaging errors in Speke's *Journal* which as yet he had made no attempt to explain. But he was a tenacious and self-confident man. He came down to the Bath meeting apparently determined to defend himself, and he stayed with his uncle, John Fuller, at Neston Park, near Box in Wiltshire.

Burton was not only ready to demolish Speke's theory; he was

going to advance a brand-new theory of his own. This, in effect, was a violent swing back to his original idea that Lake Tanganyika and its feeder streams were the true headwaters of the Nile. He had prepared a sketch map which showed the Rusizi River flowing northwards *out* of Lake Tanganyika and entering the Lūta Nzigé—that other large lake to the west of Lake Victoria. Speke's Lake Victoria he all but banished from his map, merely describing it as the “supposed site” of a lake.

Now, as we know, Burton and Speke together had been to the northern end of Lake Tanganyika in 1858, and although they had not seen the Rusizi River, they had accepted the reports of the local Africans that it flowed *into* the lake and thus could not possibly be the Nile. Burton had felt “sick at heart” at the time. But now, upon further reflection, he simply reversed his previous decision and made the Rusizi flow the other way. The local Africans must have misinformed them about the river. In any case, he declared, he and Speke had been in no condition to verify matters when they were on the lake in 1858 since “Speke was deaf and almost blind, I was paralytic, and we were both helpless.”

Before the meeting took place Isabel Burton tried unsuccessfully to bring about a reconciliation between the two men. “It is interesting *now*,” she wrote (in 1892), “to mark in their letters how they descend from ‘Dear Jack’ and ‘Dear Dick’ to ‘Dear Burton’ and ‘Dear Speke’, until they become ‘Sir’.” And she records that before the meeting a friend “conveyed to Richard that Speke had said that if Burton appeared on the platform at Bath he would kick him. I remember Richard's answer—‘Well, that *settles* it! By God he *shall* kick me’—and so to Bath we went.”

Yet Burton was nervous as well as pugnacious about the coming encounter. He came down to Bath with Isabel, she being elaborately dressed and almost the only woman at the conference, and they went off to attend a preliminary session in Section E (Geography and Ethnography) on the morning of September 15—the day prior to the great debate. There they saw Speke. The two men cut one another dead. It seemed to Burton that his rival looked ill and his eyesight and his hearing appeared to be troubling him again. Presently, about 1:30 pm, Burton saw someone beckon to Speke from the bottom of the hall. Speke at once got up, and ejaculating, “I can't stand this any longer,” left the room.

On the following morning Burton, Isabel, Sir Roderick Murchison and several hundred other gentlemen assembled once more in the

hall for the opening of the debate. "All the distinguished people," Isabel says, "were with the council. Richard *alone was excluded*, and stood on the platform—*we two alone*, he with his notes in his hand."

One can perhaps best follow what happened next from Burton's own description: "Early in the forenoon fixed for what silly tongues called the 'Nile Duel', I found a large assembly in the rooms of Section E. A note was handed round in silence. Presently my friend Mr. Findlay broke the tidings to me. Captain Speke had lost his life yesterday, at 4:00 pm, whilst shooting over a cousin's grounds. He had been missed in the field and his kinsman found him lying upon the earth, shot through the body close to the heart."

Mr. Seton Deardon, in his study of Burton, says that "Burton staggered visibly on the platform, then sank into a chair with his face working 'By God, he's killed himself!' he exclaimed. When he got home he wept, repeating over and over again the name 'Jack', 'Jack'." Isabel also has recorded that, "When we got home he wept long and bitterly, and I was for many a day trying to comfort him."

Burton, however, managed to recover himself at the meeting. After Sir Roderick Murchison had delivered a moving address of condolence to Speke's relatives, Burton completed the morning's proceedings by reading a paper on "The Ethnology of Dahomey".

What had actually happened on the previous day was this: directly he left the hall Speke drove to Neston Park, which was six or seven miles from Bath, and there at 2:30 pm, with his cousin George Fuller and a gamekeeper, Daniel Davis, he had gone out after partridges. About 4:00 pm, Fuller, who was sixty yards away, heard a third very loud report from Speke's gun, which was a Lancaster breech-loader with no safety catch. Looking up he saw Speke standing on a two-foot stone wall. Then Speke fell. Fuller rushed up to discover his cousin lying on the ground with a terrible wound in his chest. One barrel of his gun had been discharged, the other was at half-cock, and it appeared that in getting over the wall Speke had drawn up the gun after him. It had gone off while he was holding its muzzle very close to his chest.

Speke was still conscious, but was bleeding profusely and it was impossible to move him—he himself said feebly, "Don't move me." Leaving the gamekeeper to look after the wounded man, Fuller ran for help, but by the time he got back with a surgeon Speke was already dead. The body was taken to the house of Speke's brother at

A sketch by Speke: the Wasegava Hills.

Corsham, and there an inquest was held. The jury returned a unanimous verdict: the deceased had died from the accidental discharge of his own gun.

On Monday, September 19, 1864, *The Times* devoted a leading article to Speke. The newspaper took the view that Speke had actually succeeded in discovering the source of the Nile—"the blue riband of the geographers." *The Times* went on to say that, "A gallant soldier, who had borne himself bravely in some of the bloodiest battles in our Indian wars, and a sagacious and enterprising traveller, who had by sheer pluck and endurance solved a problem which has vexed the curiosity of mankind since the dawn of history, has in the full vigour of manhood fallen lifeless in a moment, the victim of a paltry, commonplace accident." The article concluded: "This unfortunate accident will put an end to the controversy which was to have amused the geographers at Bath."

The burial took place at Dowlish Wake church close to Speke's family home, and it was attended by Murchison, Livingstone and Grant. A window and a monument were erected at the church to his memory, and later a granite obelisk was put up in Kensington Gardens in London. The inscription on this obelisk reads quite simply, "In memory of Speke, Victoria Nyanza and the Nile, 1864".

Speke was unmarried and just thirty-seven when he died, and a strange anonymity surrounds his memory. Where other, lesser explorers are revered, Speke is hardly more than a name. It is not

even a name that is instantly associated with the Nile, as Burton's is with Arabia and Livingstone's with Africa. Burton and Livingstone have their biographers in nearly every generation; no book of any consequence has ever been written about Speke. His very death remains obscure, since many still think that he preferred suicide to facing Burton, though there is no evidence to prove it. Indeed everything we know about Speke must dispose us to think that if he contemplated suicide at all it would have been after his fight with his antagonist, not before. And yet the doubt remains.



Another sketch by Speke: the Blue Mountain at Kisanga.

There was no great remorse in England at the time of Speke's death; rather a feeling of embarrassment. *The Times*, however, was wrong in saying that the controversy was finished; Speke's opponents lost little time in still further diminishing the importance of his last tremendous journey. Grant lived on until 1892 and was eventually made a Companion of the Bath, but not for his exploit on the Nile; the distinction was awarded for some inconspicuous service he rendered in Abyssinia. Speke, of course, had had the Royal Geographical Society's medal, but some time elapsed before Queen Victoria was moved to observe that he had died "before he had received any mark of our Royal favour." Speke's father was then advised that he was permitted to add a crocodile and a hippopotamus to his coat of arms.

Later again a plaque was placed at the Ripon Falls. These falls have now been submerged beneath a hydro-electric dam, and somewhere in the green depths of the great river the place where Speke's plaque used to stand has been obliterated for ever.

Chapter Five

Obviously the problem of the Nile was never going to be cleared up by learned speculation in London. The answer could be found only in Africa itself, and now the chief hopes of the geographers were fixed upon Samuel Baker and his wife, who in March 1863, following their meeting with Speke and Grant, had set off southwards from Gondokoro. Speke had confided to them the general position of the Lūta Nzigé, which was the possible second source of the Nile, and they had decided to go in search of it.

Baker is a kind of fulcrum in African exploration. He stands in the centre of all theories, emotions and moral attitudes, never deviating too far one way or the other. Yet he is a difficult man to define; having attached one label to him you find that you must quickly add another. Thus you might describe him as a splendid specimen of a typical hunting-and-shooting Anglo-Indian nabob, but then he writes extremely good books and is a very fair linguist; he is a prosperous member of the trading middle class, but then he travels abroad on the most hazardous and daring journeys; he rears a large Victorian family and then, on the death of his wife, he marries a beautiful blonde Hungarian girl, Florence Ninian von Sass, some fifteen years his junior; he is pompous, conservative, sentimental and stubborn, and at other times none of those things; and yet, in the midst of all this, he is as steady as the captain of a ship.

Baker was born in 1821 (the same year as Burton), and he came from a line of naval captains and planters in the colonies. His father was a wealthy shipowner and the director of a bank and a railway. He was a fair, blue-eyed boy, passionately fond of shooting and the out-of-doors, and he grew up to be a broad-shouldered man of medium height, very tough and solid; his fair hair sprouted from his chin in a massive beard. He completed his education in Germany, married the daughter of an English clergyman, and was off to the outposts of the world. At one time Baker founded an agricultural settlement in Ceylon, and at another he was the construction manager of a railway along the Danube; but it was his obsession

with big-game shooting that led him on. He shot elephants in Ceylon, tigers in India, bears in the Balkans, and in the early eighteen-sixties he went over to Africa with his lovely young second wife (his four surviving children by the first marriage being safely disposed with relatives in England) to see what was offering for his gun in the wilds of the Sudan. He had, too, a second object in view: he thought he would combine a little exploring with the sport. Why not an expedition up the Nile that would take him to its very source?

Baker prepared for this excursion with great thoroughness. He spent a year in the Sudan following up the Nile tributaries to the Abyssinian border and learning Arabic as he went along; then he assembled his expedition in Khartoum, providing himself with a battery of guns and the best of camping equipment and scientific instruments. He was a new kind of explorer: since he was wealthy, he was a private traveller having no connection with the government, the Church or the scientific societies, and he was under no instructions from anybody; he was simply out to please himself. Yet a more professional explorer never set foot in Africa. He had been corresponding with Petherick, and at Petherick's invitation he and his wife put up at the empty British consulate at Khartoum.

Khartoum was, in its own way, as strange and as wild as Zanzibar; indeed, these two towns between them drained off the great bulk of the slave and ivory trade of East Africa, all the caravans south of the Equator going out southeastwards to the Indian Ocean and those to the north descending the Nile to Khartoum. The Egyptians ruled the Sudan from Khartoum; but perhaps pillaged is a better word than ruled. Practically every official from the governor-general, Musa Pasha, downwards was involved in the slave trade, and the garrison of fifteen thousand Egyptian and Nubian troops lived on the land as an army of occupation might live, except that it was far more ruthless and disorderly. Its main business was gathering taxes, and these were extorted in kind from the natives, either by the use of the whip, or by armed raids on the cattle and the grain stores in the villages.

"A more miserable, filthy and unhealthy place," Baker says, "can hardly be imagined." Beyond the river was nothing but an appalling desert; within the town itself some thirty thousand people densely crowded into huts of burned brick that were occasionally flooded by the Nile. Dead animals lay rotting in the undrained streets and the only supply of water was a muddy fluid brought up from the river by oxen-worked waterwheels. Nothing in the town could be done except



Sir Samuel Baker.

by bribery; torture and flogging took place as a matter of course in the prisons; and Musa Pasha himself combined "the worst of Oriental failings with the brutality of a wild animal." Throughout most of the year the heat was overwhelming, and when the *haboob* blew up, the sand-filled sky was black as night.

And yet Khartoum was a fascinating place. This was almost the last point of civilization on the edge of an immense wilderness. Every caravan that set out was an exploration; every boat that returned down the Nile brought with it something that was phenomenal and strange: animals and birds that had not been classified as yet; wild tribesmen with outlandish ornaments stuck through their lips, ears and noses; plants and flowers that produced new drugs and perfumes; stones that might prove to contain silver or gold. The ivory trade alone was worth forty thousand pounds a year.

Apart from the Africans, the population of Khartoum was made up chiefly of Syrians, Greeks, Copts, Armenians, Turks, Arabs and Egyptians, and many of these had taken Galla girls from Abyssinia—"the Venuses of that country"—as their wives or concubines. About thirty Europeans were living in the town, and life for them was not intolerable. They had somewhat better and cooler houses than the general run, a monthly camel post kept them in touch with the outside world, and many luxuries such as wines, French biscuits, soaps and perfumes were brought to them across the desert.

But it was the slave trade that kept Khartoum going. On a normal expedition a trader would sail south from Khartoum in December with two or three hundred armed men, and at some convenient spot would land and form an alliance with a native chieftain. Then together the tribesmen and the Khartoum slavers would fall upon some neighbouring village in the night, firing the huts just before dawn and shooting into the flames. It was the women that the slavers chiefly wanted, and these were secured by placing a heavy forked pole known as a *sheba* on their shoulders. The head was locked in by a crossbar, the hands were tied to the pole in front, and the children were bound to their mothers by a chain passed round their necks. Everything the village contained would be looted—cattle, ivory, grain, even crude jewellery—and then the whole cavalcade would be marched back to the river to await shipment to Khartoum. Usually the alliances between traders and native chieftains were kept on from year to year, the chieftain building up a fresh store of slaves and ivory while the trader was disposing of the last consignment at Khartoum. Every trader had his own territory and by mutual

agreement the country was parcelled out all the way from Khartoum to Gondokoro and beyond.

Officially the trade was illegal, but the only effect of this was that the slaves were not sold openly in Khartoum; they were disposed of at established points of rendezvous in the desert outside the town, and thence marched off along the caravan routes to the Red Sea for shipment to Arabia or Persia, or sent directly down the Nile to Cairo.

This monstrous traffic had so ravaged and antagonized the tribes south of Khartoum that the whole country was in an uproar. This made it hazardous for any private traveller to proceed without a large armed escort, and there was another, more serious difficulty for Baker: the Egyptian officials at Khartoum were by no means eager to have a stray white man roaming about in the slaving areas to report on their activities to the outside world. Musa Pasha therefore did all he could to prevent the Bakers from getting on. He denied them boats and he contrived to prevent their engaging an escort.

But it would have needed a great deal more determination than Musa Pasha possessed to thwart the Bakers. On their arrival in Khartoum in June 1862 they found that they had an additional and urgent reason for continuing into the interior. A report (which turned out to be mistaken) had come in that Petherick and his wife were dead; they had gone south some months earlier, and the Royal Geographical Society now asked Baker if he would take Petherick's place in the search for Speke and Grant. The two explorers had already been missing for over a year.

After six months' persistent effort in Khartoum, Baker acquired three sailing boats, ninety-six men, provisions for four months, twenty-one donkeys, four camels and four horses. He was also joined by a German traveller, Johann Schmidt, whom he had picked up in the Sudan. On December 18, 1862, they set sail for Gondokoro.

For five hundred miles south of Khartoum the Nile proceeds through the desert on a broad and fairly regular course, with trees and occasional low, bare hills or *jebels* on either bank. But at the point where the Sobat comes in from the Abyssinian mountains, a short distance above the present town of Malakal, the river turns west, the air grows more humid, and this is the first warning that the Sudd lies ahead. There is no more formidable swamp in the world than the Sudd. The Nile loses itself in a vast sea of papyrus ferns and rotting vegetation, and in that fetid heat there is a spawning tropical life that can hardly have altered very much since the beginning of the world. Crocodiles and hippopotami flop about in the muddy

water, mosquitoes and other insects choke the air and weird water birds keep watch along the banks—except that here there are no ordinary banks, merely chance pools in the forest of apple-green reeds that stretches away in a feathery mass to the horizon. This region is neither land nor water. Year by year the current keeps bringing down floating vegetation, packing it into chunks perhaps twenty feet thick and strong enough for an elephant to walk on. Then the debris breaks away in islands and forms again in another place, and this is repeated in a thousand indistinguishable patterns.

There were three main waterways through the Sudd, and all or any of them might be blocked at any time; some sixty miles beyond Malakal, the Bahr-el-Zeraf, the River of the Giraffes, split off to the south; then, another fifty miles further on, there was a sheet of fairly open water known as Lake No, and here the stream divided, one section striking off in a general southwesterly direction while the other, the Bahr-el-Jebel, continued directly south. This last was the main channel used by the traders. About five hundred miles south of Lake No they got free of the Sudd and arrived at Gondokoro.

Beyond Gondokoro they could proceed no further by water; the Nile there broke up into cataracts that continued intermittently for about eighty miles. Thus Gondokoro had become the main commercial centre in the interior, even though it was little more than a miserable collection of huts on the east bank of the river.

The Sudd that year was fairly clear, and Baker's little flotilla accomplished the thousand-mile voyage from Khartoum to Gondokoro in forty days. On the way Johann Schmidt died, others fell ill, and the whole party suffered terribly from the mosquitoes. Gondokoro, says Baker, "was a perfect hell," a sort of Yukon gold-rush camp in the tropics, with six hundred traders and their men drinking, quarrelling and insanely shooting off their guns.

The Bakers had been there only a fortnight when, as we have seen, Speke and Grant arrived from Bunyoro. In his account of the meeting Baker wrote that "Speke and Grant with characteristic candour and generosity gave me a map of their route, showing that they had been unable to complete the actual exploration of the Nile, and that a most important portion still remained to be determined . . . a large lake called the Lûta Nzigé."

Soon after Speke and Grant had gone north to Khartoum the Bakers set out for the lake. *The Albert N'yanza, Great Basin of the Nile*, Baker's account of his next two years' wanderings, is the most readable of explorers' books. It contains indeed the ingredients of

almost all African adventure stories that have been written from that day to this. When wild beasts charge, Baker with his deadly aim stops them in their tracks. At the outset of the journey he quells a mutiny among his own men by striking down the ringleader with his fist. Then, as they advance, all their baggage animals die and they are forced to ride oxen, their food supplies fail and they are reduced to eating grass, fever lays them prostrate for days and weeks on end, deceitful guides mislead them, hippopotami overturn their boats, the slave traders cheat them, the tribes attack with poisoned arrows, and



The Sudd

"There is no more formidable swamp in the world."

they are never for long out of hearing of the war drums and savage dancing. Through it all Mrs. Baker never flinches. "She was not a screamer," her husband says. When she hears stealthy footsteps approaching their hut at night, she quietly touches him on the sleeve and he reaches for his revolver to deal with the intruder. When heavy dew drenches her Victorian skirts and they bring her to the ground, she has no compunction about getting into men's clothing.

At last, on January 22, 1864, in the company of an Arab slaver named Ibrahim, the Bakers reached the Nile near the Karuma Falls where the river turns sharply to the west. Here they were on the borders of Bunyoro, and Kamrasi's tribesmen hailed them from the opposite bank. Baker's interpreter explained that he was "Speke's

brother", and had come with rich presents for Kamrasi, but the tribesmen feared that this was just another slaving raid, and although they came close to the shore in a canoe they would not land. Baker describes the scene:

"‘Let us look at him!’ cried the headman in the boat; having prepared for the introduction by changing my clothes in a grove of plantains for my dressing room, and altering my costume to a tweed suit, something similar to that worn by Speke. I climbed up a high and almost perpendicular rock that formed a natural pinnacle on the face of the cliff, and waved my cap to the crowd on the opposite side. . . . Upon landing through the high reeds, they recognized the similarity of my beard and general complexion to that of Speke; and their welcome was at once displayed by extravagant dancing and gesticulating with lances and shields, rushing at me with the points of their lances thrust close to my face, and shouting and singing in great excitement."

Finally Baker's party—one hundred and ten of them in all—was allowed to cross the river. Mrs. Baker caused a great sensation. She chose this moment to wash her hair, and the tribesmen and their families gathered round in amazement at the sight of the long golden tresses reaching to her waist. There followed then a wearisome palaver before the local chiefs agreed to lead the party to Kamrasi's headquarters, ten days' march to the south at Mrooli, at the head of Lake Kyoga. By the time they reached their destination Baker was so ill and weak that he had to be carried into the king's presence on a stretcher and laid like a trophy at his feet. Kamrasi, surrounded by his subordinate chiefs, sat on a copper stool that had been placed on a carpet of leopard skins, and he surveyed his helpless guest with equanimity. He explained that he had greatly feared that Baker had come to plunder his country. But now it was evident that he was Speke's brother, merely another impoverished traveller: he was too weak to be bad. Thus reassured, the king set about the customary business of demanding presents—shotguns, beads, carpets, lengths of cloth, everything he could lay hands on. He also insisted that Baker should repair the gold chronometer Speke had given him in 1862—it had "gone dead" after he had poked at the works with a needle to discover where the ticking came from.

It was a miserable time for the Bakers. The rain poured down. Regularly each day Baker was seized by a violent attack of malaria, and all his quinine was exhausted. Again and again he asked Kamrasi to supply him with porters and a guide, so that he could

proceed to the mysterious lake to the west, but he was invariably met with a demand for more presents.

The crisis came in February 1864. Kamrasi announced that Baker should go to the lake, but Mrs. Baker must remain behind: he would provide Baker with a good-looking Bunyoro virgin in exchange for her. Baker drew his pistol and pointing it at Kamrasi's chest told him he was about to shoot him dead. Mrs. Baker, meanwhile, rising from her sickbed, rushed at the king with an outburst of furious indignation; and at this Kamrasi gave way.

On the following day porters and an escort were produced, and the travellers set off on their great adventure. They were held up almost at once by the swamp and the matted vegetation on the Kafu River to the southwest of Mrooli. "It was equally impossible," Baker wrote later, "to ride or to be carried over this treacherous surface; thus I led the way and begged Mrs. Baker to follow me on foot, precisely in my track. The river was about eighty yards wide, and I had scarcely completed a fourth of the distance and looked back to see if my wife followed close to me, when I was horrified to see her standing in one spot, and sinking gradually through the weeds, her face distorted and perfectly purple. Almost as soon as I perceived her, she fell, as though shot dead. In an instant I was by her side; and with the assistance of eight or ten of my men, I dragged her through the yielding vegetation, and up to our waists we scrambled across to the other side, just keeping her head above the water to have carried her would have been impossible, as we should all have sunk together through the reeds. I laid her under a tree, and bathed her head and face with water; but she lay perfectly insensible, as though dead, with teeth and hands firmly clenched, and her eyes open, but fixed. It was a *coup de soleil*."

Since there was no food to be had on the river, Baker struggled forward for two more days, his unconscious wife lying on a stretcher, and on the third morning she woke demented. For a week Baker sat with her through the day and night while she raved deliriously. He managed to obtain a little wild honey and a guinea-fowl or two, but they were by now half starved and still the rain poured down. At the end of a week Baker himself collapsed, but when he woke many hours later he found that his wife's brain had cleared at last, and that she was able to recognize him. After two further days to recuperate they pushed on again. By March 13 they were about twenty-five miles north of the Equator, and their guide announced that they should come within sight of the lake on the following day.

"That night," Baker says, "I hardly slept. For years I had striven to reach the 'sources of the Nile'. In my nightly dreams during the arduous voyage I had always failed, but after so much hard work and perseverance the cup was at my very lips.

"*The 14th March*—The sun had not risen when I was spurring my ox after the guide, who had been promised a double handful of beads on arrival at the lake. The day broke beautifully clear, and having crossed a deep valley between the hills, we toiled up the opposite slope. I hurried to the summit. The glory of our prize burst suddenly upon me! There, like a sea of quicksilver, lay far beneath the grand expanse of water—a boundless sea horizon on the south and southwest, glittering in the noon-day sun; and on the west, at fifty or sixty miles' distance, blue mountains rose from the bosom of the lake to a height of about seven thousand feet above its level."

Baker and his wife dismounted from their oxen and in a fever of excitement began to drag themselves down the steep cliff towards the water's edge.

"I led the way, grasping a stout bamboo. My wife in extreme weakness tottered down the pass, supporting herself upon my shoulder, and stopping to rest every twenty paces. After a toilsome descent of about two hours, we gained the level plain below the cliff. A walk of about a mile through flat sandy meadows brought us to the water's edge. The waves were rolling upon a white pebbly beach: I rushed into the lake, and thirsty with heat and fatigue, with a heart full of gratitude, I drank deeply from the Sources of the Nile."

Well, perhaps it was not *the* source of the Nile, he explains, but at any rate it was *a* source, and for the moment it was marvellous. With solemnity he named it Lake Albert, in honour of Queen Victoria's husband, who had so recently died.

"It was with extreme emotion," he goes on, "that I enjoyed this glorious scene. My wife, who had followed me so devotedly, stood by my side pale and exhausted—a wreck upon the shores of the great Albert lake that we had so long striven to reach. No European foot had ever trod upon its sand, nor had the eyes of a white man ever scanned its vast expanse of water. Here was the great basin of the Nile that received *every drop of water* even from the passing shower to the roaring mountain torrent that drained from Central Africa towards the north."

And now they faced the inevitable problem that besets all explorers—how to get home? From fishermen on the lakeshore they managed to obtain crude canoes made of hollowed-out tree trunks,

and in those they paddled northwards for the next two weeks, through fearful storms, until they reached the point where the Nile entered the topmost corner of the lake. Here there was another reward awaiting them continuing a short distance up the river to the east, through what is now a national park for wild animals, they came upon a spectacular waterfall. The Murchison Falls (so named by Baker in honour of the President of the Royal Geographical Society) are only twenty feet across and some one hundred and thirty feet high, and the whole pent-up volume of the river dashes out of a ravine like a burst water main; it is really more of an explosion of water than a fall, and it can exert a curious mesmerism over the mind if one stands there and watches for a while. The pattern of thundering water is endlessly repeated yet never for two seconds quite the same.

The Bakers now abandoned their boat and took refuge above the falls on the island of Patooan and there once more they collapsed. Civil war was now raging throughout Bunyoro, and two more months went by before the Bakers, on the point of starvation, were able to get back to Kamrasi's headquarters. Here Baker learned that the man whom they had previously seen was not the king at all, but a younger brother named M'Gambi whom Kamrasi had prudently sent in his place in case the Bakers should prove dangerous. M'Gambi or Kamrasi, it hardly mattered to the two desperate fugitives—but Baker thought it advisable to put on a show for his meeting with the real king: he got out a kilt, a sporran, and a Glengarry bonnet from his kit and in these presented himself at the palace. Kamrasi was sufficiently impressed to offer food to his guests and then, in the usual way, doggedly set about relieving them of their last possessions.

Six months went by and nothing happened. Regularly in the afternoon Baker went down with malaria, and it was not until he devised a means of distilling alcohol from sweet potatoes that he rallied a little. Mutesa was attacking Bunyoro with an army from the south—and the hostilities made it impossible for unescorted travellers to get about. When Kamrasi was forced to flee to the north from the invading army, the Bakers had no choice but to go with him. By September 1864 they had resigned themselves to dying in Central Africa, when an Arab slave caravan came in from Gondokoro bringing with it not only stores for the Bakers but mail as well. From Speke (who had died in Wiltshire just a few days before) they received a copy of *The Illustrated London News* containing his own

and Grant's portraits, and a copy of *Punch* with a cartoon on the discovery of the source of the Nile.

The Bakers now had cloth with which to obtain both food and porters, and they joined forces with the Arab caravan on its return to the north. In February 1865, after two years' absence, they reached Gondokoro. The party made a ceremonial entry, Baker and his wife mounted on oxen, guns firing and the Union Jack flying, and they were met by a bitter anticlimax: no Europeans were there to welcome them, and there was no mail. The Bakers had long since been presumed dead.



Lady Baker.

Tragedy and misery were to pursue the explorers to the very end. Baker managed to hire a boat for the return to Khartoum, but the Sudd blocked them for many weeks, and while they waited for a favourable wind, plague broke out. A number of the men went mad and died.

They had a warm welcome from the European community when they finally reached Khartoum (where they heard for the first time of Speke's death), but even the normally uneventful onward passage to Cairo was hindered by near shipwreck in the cataracts and a skirmish with the Arabs. At last, in October 1865, they reached Suez, and Baker was able to indulge in a luxury which for a long time had been haunting his imagination—a tankard of iced pale ale. A job was found in Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo for Richard, their last surviving follower, and they set sail for home. "Had I really come from the Nile sources?" Baker asked himself. "It was no dream. A witness sat before me; a face still young, but bronzed like an Arab by years of exposure to a burning sun; haggard and worn with toil and sickness, and shaded with cares, happily now past; the devoted companion

of my pilgrimage, to whom I owed success and life—my wife.”

There was enough here for half a dozen film scenarios and the British public loved it. Speke and Grant in their accounts of their journeys had been a little too bizarre and at the same time pedestrian; Burton's treatises had been too sharp and too esoteric except for the sophisticated few; and Dr. Livingstone belonged on a high moral plane that was sometimes beyond the average reach. But Baker's book *The Albert N'yanza* was just right; he and his wife had the sort of reactions that everyone could enjoy and understand. One suffered and lived vicariously with this couple in the terrible African jungle just as one lived with the characters in a novel. And how brave she was. How gallant and determined he had been. They deserved their success.

There was another quality about Baker that people liked; he was not for ever, like Speke, pushing on impatiently to reach the journey's end; while he was in Africa he lived there, he made a home of it. Whenever he came to a cul-de-sac he accepted the fact for the time being and, like Robinson Crusoe, at once set about making himself comfortable in the wilderness. Being an extremely practical man he would with equal facility make a boat, an alcoholic still or a suit of clothes from wild animal skins. He and his wife gathered a little group of personal retainers round them, and these were taught to cook, serve at the table and make beds like any other domestic servants. They had their pet monkeys and their pet birds who travelled with them, and even their riding oxen were properly broken in and trained. Baker's observations of native life are full of interest: he notes that the tribal drums are sometimes made from an elephant's ear, that the goods the natives brought to market were packed in fresh reeds, and that the beer gourds were covered with a lid and their contents drained through a straw. He describes just how the bark of trees was beaten into a cloth, and how the tribesmen made needles and sewed squares of goatskin into mantles "as expertly as a French glover". He supplies details of the vast Nile perch: one half of a fish they caught in Lake Albert (the other half having been eaten by a crocodile) weighed one hundred and fifty pounds.

Before Baker ever got to England he was awarded the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society, and his knighthood soon followed. The press was delighted with Sir Samuel and Lady Baker (now no longer a wreck but dressed in the height of fashion), and so was society in London. *The Albert N'yanza* ran into three editions, and

it was to be reprinted frequently in the years ahead. His *Nile Tributaries*, the account of his first year's shooting safari in the Sudan, soon followed and was equally successful. From now on he was Baker of the Nile.

It would be unfair, of course, to leave Baker and his reputation here. His books had an importance that went far beyond their popular interest. Central Africa was no longer a blank space on the map. it was an undeveloped but quite habitable region, with perfectly recognizable people living in it, and it was being exploited with the utmost savagery and brutality by the Mohammedans. The Nile, in short, had now become more than a geographical interest: it had a political, humanitarian and commercial importance as well, and Baker drove home the point that, unless England stepped in, this promising wilderness would be utterly despoiled by the slavers and lost for ever to Christianity.

And yet, until the mystery of the physical nature of the region and its great river was cleared up, it was difficult to know precisely how to act. Baker's discovery of Lake Albert had by no means resolved the mystery of the Nile; in fact, it had confused the issue still further. Like Speke he had seen a large body of water and had concluded that it ran on indefinitely, perhaps for hundreds of miles, to the south. But he had no means of proving this; he had not circumnavigated the lake. All he could really assert was that the stream which Speke had seen pouring westwards at Karuma Falls in Central Uganda did in fact flow into his newly discovered Lake Albert and then out of it again towards the north. But whether or not this was the Nile he could not say with any authority, for he had not followed the stream northwards from Lake Albert to Gondokoro.

Another question remained, and it was vital: suppose this *was* the Nile, which lake was the true source, Speke's Victoria or Baker's Albert? If Baker's Albert stretched as far south as he thought it did, then surely it had the better claim. Baker himself left the matter in the air: Lake Albert, he said, was at least the *western* source of the river and a considerable, if not its principal, reservoir. The *full* Nile, he claimed, began only when the stream issued from it. Geographers in London saw his point but still it was not conclusive.

Speke's detractors naturally lost no time in exploiting the possibilities of Lake Albert. Surely it could be argued, they said, that this new lake might be fed by a river still further south, and if so, then Speke's claims about Lake Victoria (if that lake really did exist) were nonsense. Even before the Bakers returned to England, Sir Roderick

Murchison acknowledged the force of this reasoning. On May 22, 1865, he delivered a eulogy of Speke to the Royal Geographical Society, but he wound up his address by announcing that he proposed to send Livingstone out to Africa once more. His mission was to endeavour to settle once and for all the problem of the watersheds of Central Africa, and he was to pay particular attention to the area south of Lake Tanganyika. Livingstone was further charged with proceeding to Lake Tanganyika itself, so as to determine whether Burton's Rusizi River flowed into or out of the lake. It was expected that the river would be found to flow north and join Baker's Lake Albert, and thus Lake Victoria would be excluded from the pattern of the Nile. Speke was still on trial.

Chapter Six

Livingstone was fifty-two when he set out upon his last journey in 1865, and he had that quality which the Arabs describe as *baraka*. In the most improbable circumstances he had the power of enhancing life and making it appear better than it was before. His mere presence seems to have conferred a blessing on everyone who met him, even the Arab slavers felt it and helped him when they could.

His Zambezi expedition, when he ascended the Zambezi River to the Victoria Falls and discovered Lake Nyasa, had been a disaster for his companions; even those who had survived had been pushed beyond all reasonable limits and had often found him self-willed and impatient of any weakness. Livingstone was never at his best when he was travelling with other white men, since he forced his own incredibly high standards upon them. But in 1865 he was on his own again, and no one had to suffer but himself. Moreover, his extraordinary concentration upon Africa had not diminished in the least. The others who went there might lose faith and become confused in quarrels amongst themselves, he never. Africa had become an essential part of his existence, and it is only when this is understood that one can find some purpose in the "sublime obstinacy" with which he kept on and on when there appeared to be no point in his continuing any more. When the other explorers have accomplished their missions their one desire is to return home. But Livingstone's mission begins and ends in Africa. He travels in circles. He dwells with the Africans themselves, eating their food, sleeping in their huts and, without losing his own identity, he makes their life

his own. No one understands the African negroes and the fearful hardships to which they were submitted better than he did. Only he could have written: "The strangest disease I have seen in this country seems really to be broken-heartedness, and it attacks free men who have been captured and made slaves." In those few words he came to the root of the matter, and they may have been just as effective as all the humanitarian outpourings that were then being broadcast from the pulpit, the House of Commons and the Anti-Slavery Society in England.

How clearly one sees that calm and rugged figure, with the flapped cap on his head, his walking stick in his hand, marching through the bush. The doubts and uncertainties that have overtaken life in the twentieth century through two world wars and a plethora of political and scientific inventions were unthinkable to him. His faith in God was absolute, and he felt instinctively that his true approach to God was in Africa. But through the years of his great journeys he had developed more and more from the medical missionary into the explorer. He had come to believe that his real work was not so much in the saving of individual human souls as in the suppression of the slave trade and in the opening up of the country so that Christianity and civilization could follow in his wake.

In 1865, when Murchison asked him to make one more effort to clear up the question of the Nile, there were no urgent duties to hold him in Britain. He had no parish there, he had left the London Missionary Society, and his wife had died three years before in Africa. Robert, his eldest son, who had been impressed at Boston into the Northern forces in the American Civil War, had succumbed to wounds at the age of eighteen in a prisoners' camp in North Carolina. The other children were being well cared for in England.

Livingstone's books had made him the most famous of all African explorers, and his royalties had brought him in enough money to be independent. Now there was this stimulating invitation from the Royal Geographical Society which would allow him to strike one more blow against slavery and to resolve finally the great enigma of the lake-and-river system in the centre of the continent.

Like Burton before him, Livingstone was coming round to the view that the true solution of the Nile had already been propounded by Herodotus and the ancient geographers, if not by the Old Testament itself. He was fascinated by Herodotus's description of the Nile springing from fountains of bottomless depth at the foot of high mountains somewhere in the centre of Africa. In reality this last

journey of Livingstone's was a half-mystical attempt to rediscover those fountains, to find a unity with the past, a divine pattern in the geography of the river.

His health had not been seriously impaired by his previous work in Africa, and in any case he had been rested by a year in England. His shoulder, which had been crushed by a lion some twenty years before and had never properly set, still troubled him from time to time, but this was not a grave impediment. So all was confidence and hope in the new journey that was about to start. The Foreign Office came forward with five hundred pounds for the expedition (though later they provided an additional thousand pounds), the society produced another five hundred pounds, and Livingstone and his friends found the rest. The explorer was appointed "Consul for Central Africa" without salary, and in August 1865 he sailed from Folkestone. He travelled via Paris (where he dropped off his daughter Agnes at school), Cairo and Bombay, and at the end of January 1866 he arrived at Zanzibar.

Not a great deal had happened in Zanzibar since Burton's time. The Sultan Seyyid Majid bin Said was still in power, and the island was being gradually drawn into the network of Western commerce and politics. Now there were half a dozen foreign consulates on the seafront, and many of the Arab and Indian merchants were growing rich. The traffic in slaves had grown still heavier; it was estimated that between eighty thousand and one hundred thousand were brought down from the interior every year, and although none were supposed to go beyond the sultan's dominions, there was no real check on the dhows that sailed back to Arabia and the East.

The sultan, upon whom Livingstone called, was both amiable and helpful: he gave him a permit to the sheikhs in the interior and loaned him a large square house that still stands on the sea wall on the outskirts of the town. It was conveniently placed for dropping stores directly down into boats in the harbour below. John Kirk, who had been with Livingstone on the Zambezi and who was now surgeon and vice-consul at the British agency, was ready to assist in organizing the expedition.

There was a complex relationship between Kirk and Livingstone. Although Kirk was much younger, their backgrounds were similar; Kirk too had come from a religious household in Scotland, he too had taken his degree in medicine and had come abroad to satisfy a craving for adventure, at first in the Crimea and then in Africa. Livingstone had taken him on the Zambezi expedition in 1858 as

physician and naturalist, and they had established the kind of intimacy that can develop only through a long series of shared experiences on a dangerous journey. Kirk had been too close to Livingstone to hero-worship him blindly, but his fundamental loyalty to his old leader was unshakable, and it was arranged that Kirk should act as the expedition's representative in the island; at a later stage he was to send on porters and supplies to await Livingstone's arrival at Ujiji on Lake Tanganyika.

This was a modest expedition compared with the usual thing, but Livingstone thought it lavish; he had brought a number of sepoys with him from Bombay and he now recruited others in Zanzibar, including three boys who had marched with Speke and Grant, bringing the total number in the caravan to sixty. In addition there was a small train of camels, buffaloes, mules and donkeys which were to serve as baggage animals.

Livingstone's plan was to keep well south of the usual caravan routes and to strike directly inland towards the unexplored country south of Lake Tanganyika; and with that object in view he landed in March 1866 at the mouth of the Rovuma River, which now divides Tanzania from Mozambique. There then began that incredible series of wanderings which were to continue for seven years.

Never can there have been a journey which was founded upon so many false assumptions as this one. It was a search for the source of a river in a region where it did not exist; it was an anti-slavery expedition that had no power whatever to put down slavery; it was the march of a man who believed that he alone, unarmed and unsupported, could pass through Africa, and that was almost impossible. Through a series of paradoxes all came right in the end; the march went on—but only because the Arab slavers took care of the sick and lonely man in the wilderness. Slavery was dealt a blow from which it never recovered—not because Livingstone was able to raise a hand against it, but because he was the helpless witness of a massacre. Even the mystery of the Nile was resolved—not by Livingstone himself but because he inspired another man to go off in another direction. And to Livingstone, no doubt, all this was as it should have been: it was the will of God.

Quite early in his march he lost nearly all his men and animals and, what was just as disastrous, he lost his medicine chest as well. At the end of a year he struggled up to the southern end of Lake Tanganyika, where the Arab slavers took care of him, though at the same time they made it almost impossible for him to go on; and

porters were unobtainable. Yet he did manage to go on, striking out west to the Lualaba River, then south to Lake Bangweolo which no white man had ever seen before, then north again to Lake Tanganyika. In March 1869, three years after leaving the coast, he arrived at Ujiji, almost toothless and half dead with malaria and other illnesses, "a ruckle of bones", only to find that the stores that Kirk had sent had been looted on the route up-country and hardly anything remained. There was no quinine and no mail. The absence of news from the outside world seems to have afflicted the African explorers almost more than any other hardship. In the hope of finding mail at some outlandish spot they would rouse themselves from their illnesses and march on for weeks or even months on end; and here the deprivation was even worse since the Arab traders refused to carry Livingstone's own letters down to the coast. He had written forty-two of them, and the Arabs knew all too well that the package contained a full account of the atrocities they were committing in the interior.

So there was nothing to be done but go on again without medicine and without supplies. Once more he headed west for the Lualaba, for he had begun to believe that it was the Nile. Now the Lualaba is, in fact, the upper Congo River that flows north in a great westward-bending arc to the Atlantic Ocean—but Livingstone had no means of discovering this. His journey came to a fearful halt one morning at Nyangwe when he saw the Arab traders there open up with their rifles at point-blank range on the natives in the village.

Livingstone had enjoyed this place; he liked to watch the people coming into market, sometimes as many as three thousand of them, to barter their chickens and fruit by the broad river. His description of what happened on July 15, 1871, reveals the depths of the tragedy that occurred to the Central African negroes when the outside world burst in upon them. The Dugumbe referred to was one of the better-established and more restrained traders—but a slaver nonetheless—and Tagamoio more nearly represents the Arabs and their terrorist methods in Central Africa at the time.

"It was," Livingstone says, "a hot, sultry day, and when I went into the market I saw Adie and Namilla, and three of the men who had lately come with Dugumbe. I was surprised to see the three with their guns, and felt inclined to reprove them for bringing weapons into the market, but I attributed it to their ignorance, and, it being very hot, I was walking away when I saw one of the fellows haggling about a fowl, and seizing hold of it. Before I could get thirty yards,

the discharge of two guns in the middle of the crowd told me that slaughter had begun; the crowds dashed off from the place, and threw down their wares in confusion, and ran. At the same time that the three opened fire on the mass of people near the upper end of the marketplace, volleys were discharged from a party down near the creek on the panic-stricken women, who dashed at the canoes. These, some fifty or more, were jammed in the creek and the men forgot their paddles in the terror that seized all. The canoes were not to be got out, for the creek was too small for so many: men and women, wounded by balls, poured into them, and leaped and scrambled into the water shrieking. A long line of heads in the river showed that great numbers struck out for an island a full mile off.

"Shot after shot continued to be fired on the helpless and perishing. Some of the long line of heads disappeared quietly: whilst other poor creatures threw their arms high, as if appealing to the great Father above, and sank.

"By-and-by all the heads disappeared; some had turned downstream towards the bank, and escaped. Dugumbe put people into one of the deserted vessels to save those in the water and saved twenty-one, but one woman refused to be taken on board from thinking that she was to be made a slave of; she preferred the chance of life by swimming, to the lot of a slave; the Bagenya women are expert in the water, as they are accustomed to dive for oysters, and those who went downstream may have escaped, but the Arabs themselves estimated the loss of life at between three hundred and thirty and four hundred souls. The shooting party near the canoe were so reckless, they killed two of their own people.

"My impulse was to pistol the murderers, but Dugumbe protested against my getting into a blood-feud, and I took his advice. After the horrible affair in the water, the party of Tagamoio, who was the chief perpetrator, continued to fire on the people there and fire their villages. As I write I hear the loud wails on the left bank over those who are slain, ignorant of their many friends who are now in the depths of the Lualaba. Oh, let Thy kingdom come! No one will ever know the exact loss on this bright sultry summer morning. It gave me the impression of being in Hell."

After this there was no hope of obtaining boats or men to follow the course of the river. Sickened by what he had seen and now seriously broken in health Livingstone struggled back to Ujiji. He had read the Bible four times on this second journey to the Lualaba. Now on his return after an absence of two years, he was practically

reduced to begging from the Arabs in order to keep alive: and thus it was that Stanley found him when he came marching into Ujiji on November 10, 1871.

"...When my spirits were at their lowest ebb," Livingstone wrote, "the good Samaritan was close at hand, for one morning Susi came running at the top of his speed and gasped out, 'An Englishman! I see him!' and off he darted to meet him. The American flag at the head of the caravan told of the nationality of the stranger. Bales of goods, baths of tin, huge kettles, cooking pots, tents, etc., made me think, 'This must be a luxurious traveller, and not one at his wits' end like me.'"

Stanley's famous description of the meeting is more lively:

"Selim said to me, 'I see the doctor, sir. Oh, what an old man! He has got a white beard!' And I—what would I not have given for a bit of friendly wilderness, where, unseen, I might vent my joy in some mad freak, such as idiotically biting my hand, turning a somersault, or slashing at trees, in order to allay those exciting feelings that were well-nigh uncontrollable. My heart beats fast, but I must not let my face betray my emotions, lest it shall detract from the dignity of a white man appearing under such extraordinary circumstances.

"So I did that which I thought was most dignified. I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people, until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, before which stood 'the white man with the grey beard'. As I advanced slowly towards him I noticed he was pale, looked wearied, had grey whiskers and moustache, wore a bluish cap with a faded gold band around it, had on a red-sleeved waistcoat, and a pair of grey tweed trousers. I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob—would have embraced him, but that I did not know how he would receive me. So I did what moral cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing—walked deliberately up to him, took off my hat, and said, 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?' 'Yes,' he said, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly.

"I replaced my hat on my head, and he replaced his cap, and we both grasped hands, and then I said aloud: 'I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you.'

"He answered, 'I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you.'"

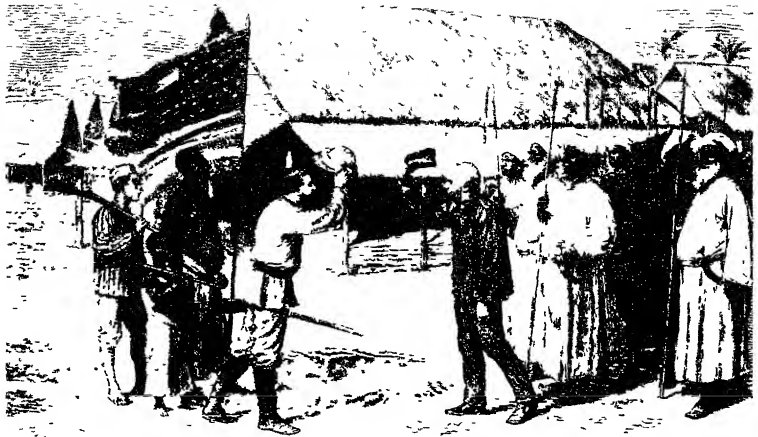
This then is the story of an incident which has been more frequently recalled than any other single event in African exploration. And yet a strange air of unreality remains. One is bound to wonder why it should have taken so long for help to arrive. For

nearly five years Livingstone's whereabouts had been a mystery. In 1868 the porters who had deserted him announced on their return to the coast that he had been killed on the shores of Lake Nyasa (which was a convenient way of explaining their desertion), and Murchison had published this news in a letter to *The Times*. But Murchison himself had not entirely believed it, and the Royal Geographical Society had sent out an expedition to discover the truth. This expedition had scarcely got under way when word reached the coast that the explorer was still alive, and soon letters were received in Zanzibar from Livingstone himself. Upon this the expedition had turned back. Thereafter a strange apathy about the explorer appears to have overtaken both officials and public alike.

From time to time vague inquiries are made, Kirk sends up his supplies from Zanzibar but without any real assurance they will reach their destination; Baker keeps a general lookout from Bunyoro far away in the north; and in the Royal Geographical Society in London there are discussions as to just what direction the explorer might have taken in the last twelve months or so. But for a long time no one makes a move to go to the assistance of the lost man. Burton, no great admirer of missionaries, affected a sardonic indifference. He wrote to a friend, when at last the hunt for Livingstone began, "rather *infra dig*, to discover a mish." In the twentieth century, of course, radio and aircraft have entirely altered the nature of exploration, and one must remember that in those days it was not unusual for a ship at sea or a traveller in a distant land to be lost sight of for months at a time; still, it is strange that Livingstone's silence was received with so much complacency. And stranger still that it was a man like Stanley who should have come to the rescue.

Even Stanley had not precisely hurried to Ujiji. In 1869 his employer, James Gordon Bennett of the New York *Herald*, had summoned him to an interview at the Grand Hotel in Paris and had said: "I want you to attend the opening of the Suez Canal and then proceed up the Nile. Send us detailed descriptions of everything likely to interest American tourists. Then go to Jerusalem, Constantinople, the Crimea, the Caspian Sea, through Persia as far as India. After that you can start looking round for Livingstone. If he is dead bring back every possible proof of his death."

Stanley had accomplished this programme in fourteen months. Having attended the canal opening he had gone up the Nile and interviewed Baker's engineer, Higginbotham; he had inspected the battlefields of the Crimea and visited Persepolis in Persia, where he



"Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"

carved his name on the ruins; he had described the awful poverty of India and now he had arrived at Ujiji.

And who was Stanley? He was a man whose real name was not Stanley at all, but Rowlands, a Welshman who was an American, a soldier who was a sailor, and now a journalist who was leading a successful expedition into the centre of Africa. Soon the world was to know all about his awful Dickensian childhood in a workhouse in Wales, his arrival as a cabin boy at New Orleans where he took the name and nationality of a kindly American who adopted him as a son, his soldiering in the Civil War, at first for the South and then for the North, his rejection by his squalid mother on his return to England, his adventures in the American navy and in General Hancock's campaign against the Red Indians, and latterly as a journalist in the British campaign against the emperor in Abyssinia. This was the career of a man of iron, a hard and ruthless adventurer.

At Ujiji he was only thirty years of age and still on the threshold of his success; it was the hardness, the quickness and the egocentricity in him that were uppermost. No two men could have differed so much as Livingstone and Stanley, nor could there have been two men, who, for the moment, were so beholden to one another. Livingstone needed medicine, supplies and news of the outside world, and his young visitor had them all. Stanley needed the "kudos" (it was a word he was fond of using) of having found this celebrated man, and in fact he received a great deal more. His brief companionship with Livingstone was, as Professor Coupland writes,

"the supreme experience of his life. He had come close to moral greatness, and he was startled, captivated, subjected by it."

At the outset of his journey, Livingstone had been to Stanley another "story", which, if successfully reported, would help him on with his journalistic career. At Zanzibar he had at once scented opposition from the African "professionals" amongst the European officials, especially in the English colony, and especially Kirk. When Stanley asked casually one day if Livingstone would receive him should he chance to cross the explorer's path in the interior, Kirk answered briefly that he thought Livingstone would not like it at all; he had an aversion to publicity. This little exchange possibly explains Stanley's cautiousness with Livingstone when he first arrived at Ujiji. But at Zanzibar he had not been deterred by it in the least. He had engaged Sidi Bombay as his factotum, and since he had plenty of money to spend he had bought the best of stores and had hired the best of porters at the highest rates. His eight months' march from the coast to Ujiji was no bad achievement, considering that he had gone down with malaria on the way, had encountered a war between the Arab dealers and the African tribes at Tabora and had actually taken part in the fighting. His two white assistants had both died. And now at the journey's end there was this comforting reception from Livingstone, this revelation of a charitable and fascinating mind. During the long conversation that now began between the two men, Stanley stored up every grain of wisdom and information that Livingstone let fall, and while Livingstone's health rapidly improved, the two fell into a leader-and-follower relationship which was agreeable to them both. Soon it seemed an excellent plan that they should go together up to the head of Lake Tanganyika and settle the question of the Rusizi River. They were away three weeks on this trip, and when Livingstone discovered that Burton was wrong—the Rusizi flowed into and not out of the lake—he returned more strongly than ever to his theory that the Lualaba was the Nile. To go back to the Lualaba, however, meant that he had to have further stores and porters, and these, he believed, could be obtained only in Tabora, some three hundred miles away. The two men walked there from Ujiji at the end of 1871.

At Tabora few stores and no porters were to be found and Stanley promised to make good the deficiency. At the end of a month he set off for the coast alone, having left behind all he could spare from his own supplies. It was arranged that Livingstone should stay on in Tabora until Stanley could get a gang of porters up to him from the



Livingstone and Stanley on the Rusizi River.

coast. In fifty-four days Stanley reached Zanzibar carrying with him more treasure than any slave and ivory trader had ever yet been able to get out of Africa: all Livingstone's journals, his own notes, which shortly were to blossom forth in his dispatches to the *New York Herald*, and his first African book, *How I Found Livingstone*. There was also a letter which Livingstone had specially written for his paper. It was in this letter that Livingstone wrote apropos of the massacre at Nyangwe: "If my disclosures regarding the terrible Ujijian slavery should lead to the suppression of the East Coast slave trade, I shall regard that as a greater matter by far than the discovery of all the Nile sources together." In this at least he was to have his wish.

Stanley had been just in time. On his way down to Bagamoyo he met an expedition which the Royal Geographical Society had at last sent out from England to find news of the lost man, and was able to assure them that their help was no longer needed: and so it was Stanley who, in May 1872, caused a sensation throughout the world with his description of the Ujiji meeting and of all that had followed. He went on to a tremendous reception in England—a letter and diamond-studded snuff box from the Queen, a medal from the Royal Geographical Society, and a round of banquets and meetings.

Livingstone meanwhile was in Tabora. Only Susi and Chuma and one or two other boys who had followed him from the beginning

remained in his service and they were quite inadequate for the portage of a long journey. Thus he had to wait until the men Stanley had promised him came up from the coast. He held his small Bible classes under the mango trees, he read Baker's *The Albert N'yanza*, he prayed, he went for walks, he wrote his journal. The *tembe* in which he lived was a lonely spot, somewhat on the outskirts of the Arab settlement. It was the usual sort of Arab trader's house, a flat earthen roof that was never absolutely proof against the rain, a "reception room", a room for sleeping and eating, an inner courtyard where the cattle and other livestock were herded at night, and quarters for the Africans. The floors were of earth tramped down by the bare feet of the household servants passing in and out.

These were the last remotely civilized surroundings that Livingstone was to know. He was now fifty-nine, and though he had rallied somewhat in Stanley's company, his health was undermined beyond all real hope of recovery. Yet he was filled with hope about his theory of the Nile, and perhaps by now in his loneliness the river had begun to assume for him a religious significance. Though often shaken by fever, there was no weakening in the steadiness of his mind. The notes and letters he sent down to the coast from time to time were written in a firm and flowing hand. Often they dealt with very practical details. If, he writes, a chronometer can be lent him by the navy without detriment to the service it will be of very signal benefit to his exploration. He signs himself, "David Livingstone, H.M. Consul, Inner Africa."

At the same time he kept dreaming of the day when he would return home: he wrote to a friend asking him to look out for rooms looking onto Regent's Park in London which he could share with his daughter Agnes.

In August 1872 the fifty-seven porters sent by Stanley finally arrived, and within a few days Livingstone led his caravan out into the bush. By now he had made up his mind that the source of the Nile would prove to be a stream running into Lake Bangweolo, which he had discovered four years before; and so he marched slightly south of west, and, having reached the shores of Lake Tanganyika somewhere about its centre, he turned directly south. By the end of April 1873, he was working round the south of Lake Bangweolo, still hoping to come on some feeder stream which would flow on through the lake into the Lualaba and perhaps join Baker's Albert Nyanza far away to the north.

It was dreadful country. The little column waded about through

an interminable swamp close to the village of a chieftain named Chitambo. Livingstone became so weak he had to be carried in a litter. In the early hours of May 1, 1873, his boys came into his hut and found him dead. He was kneeling across his bed in prayer.

However often the story is told of Susi's and Chuma's journey to the coast with Livingstone's body it remains incredible, and perhaps it was a miracle of a kind, since such devotion among primitive and uneducated men can hardly have been inspired by any ordinary emotion. They cut out the heart and viscera, and dried the body in the sun for a fortnight. It was then wrapped in calico and placed in a cylinder of bark, and this was sewn into a sheet of sailcloth and lashed to a pole so that it could be carried by two men. In the middle of May, Susi, Chuma and sixty-odd men who had remained faithful to the end, set out for Zanzibar. Well over a thousand miles divided them from the Indian Ocean, and it was not really feasible that such a strange burden could be carried over that distance in the heart of Africa where so many tribes were out to despoil every wayfarer who came by. Nevertheless the journey was accomplished in eleven months. During that time two more expeditions set out from England in search of Livingstone, one of them intending to strike inland from the west coast of Africa, and the other from the east coast. Susi and Chuma met the east-coast party led by the naval officer, Lovett Cameron, when they reached Tabora in October 1873. Cameron then continued on to Ujiji (where he salvaged a quantity of Livingstone's papers) and eventually emerged on the Atlantic coast two years later. Susi and Chuma meanwhile went on to the Indian Ocean, and when they walked into Bagamoyo on February 15, 1874, HMS *Vulture* was waiting to take the body across to Zanzibar. Here for a time it was placed in Hamerton's old house on the seafront, which was still the British consulate, awaiting transshipment to England. There could be no doubt about the dead man's identity; when a surgeon came to open the improvised coffin the mark of the old lion wound on the shoulder was plainly visible.

A special train was sent to Southampton to take Livingstone on his last journey to Westminster Abbey on April 18, 1874, and on that day England went into mourning.

In London the body had remained overnight in the map room of the Royal Geographical Society in Savile Row, and when the cortège set out in the morning the streets were lined with silent crowds. Admission to the abbey could be obtained only by ticket and the building was crammed. Stanley, Grant and Kirk

were among the pallbearers who carried the body to the grave.

Today, if one enters the Abbey by the main door, one comes first upon the tomb of the Unknown Soldier and then, a little beyond it, Livingstone's grave, with its epitaph inscribed in brass lettering on the grey stone. It reads, "Brought by faithful hands over land and sea here rests David Livingstone, missionary, traveller, philanthropist, born March 19, 1813 at Blantyre, Lanarkshire, died May 1, 1873 at Chitambo's village, Ulala.

"For thirty years his life was spent in an unwearied effort to evangelize the native races, to explore the undiscovered secrets, to abolish the desolating slave trade, of Central Africa, where with his last words he wrote: 'All I can add in my solitude is may Heaven's rich blessing come down on everyone, American, English or Turk, who will help to heal this open sore of the world.'"

Already Livingstone's great power over men's minds had reached out from Central Africa. The sources of the Nile eluded him at the end, but his description of the massacre at Nyangwe had raised a storm of indignation which forced the sultan of Zanzibar to close the slave market on the island for ever.

Chapter Seven

A curious combination of hatred and love drew the explorers back to Africa. At one time or another most of them rail against the country and its inhabitants, declaring them to be brutal, scheming, debauched and finally hopeless. It is extraordinary in the accounts of their journeys how seldom they are touched by the beauty of the landscape, the tremendous plains of the central plateau with the blue mountains in the distance and the herds of wild animals roaming there; to the explorers it is all basically hostile, incomplete, not to be regarded with an aesthetic eye until it is reduced to order by civilization and Christianity. It was the same with all of them, whether they were missionaries like Livingstone, scholars like Burton, soldiers and collectors like Speke, or sportsmen like Baker.

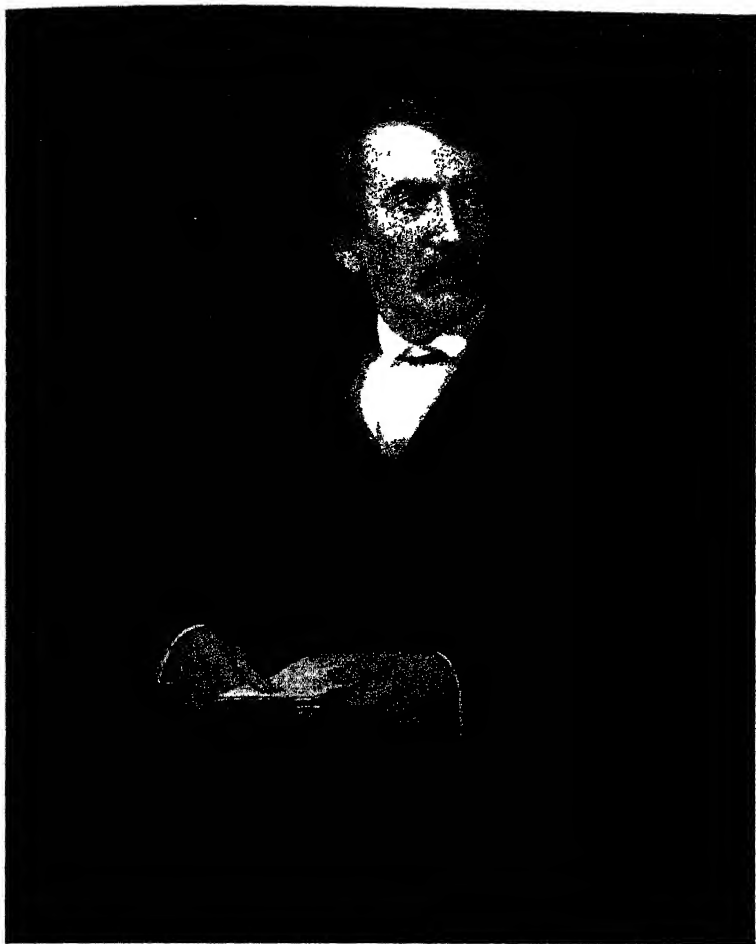
All of them in their books claim that they are in Africa because they have a mission there; they want to resolve the geographical problems and to reform the country, to convert the untilled land into useful farms, to open up commerce and to lift the natives out of their savagery into a higher way of life. And yet one cannot help feeling that there is still another reason for their journeys: a fundamental

restlessness, a simple absorbing curiosity in everything that is strange and new. To satisfy that curiosity they are prepared to put up with anything, even the prospect of death itself.

Now Stanley does not fit into this scheme of things at all easily. He is a new kind of man in Africa. You might call him a businessman-explorer, not in the sense of his wanting to trade in Africa, but in the extremely logical, sensible and efficient way in which he went about the problem of setting up an expedition and getting it to the journey's end. It may have been ruthless but it was also expert, and he was very determined and very brave. Perhaps he resembles Speke more than any of the others, but not even Speke was as concentrated as Stanley was. Stanley was not in Africa to reform the people nor to build an empire, and he was not impelled by any real interest in such matters as anthropology, botany or geology. To put it bluntly, he was out to make a name for himself, and it must be judged as the supreme irony of African exploration that in the end he should turn out to be the greatest empire builder and explorer of them all.

Naturally this brusque and philistine irruption into Africa was not very endearing to an educated public in England who had been following the exploits of its own favourite explorers for years past; here was a man, it was felt, who would take on any adventure for the sake of publicity, and under any patronage, an interloper who had changed his nationality once and might do so again (as in point of fact Stanley did; he reverted later to his British citizenship). But then Stanley was a man who attracted prejudice almost as strongly as Livingstone attracted love. His only course was to baffle his enemies with his achievements and this he proceeded to do. Fortunately he had no need of friends to put his case for him. He was the most readable of authors; his books have a pace and an excitement which not even the occasional pomposities can subdue, and the facts he had to give were incontrovertible facts based upon his own close and hard-won observation.

So now in 1874 he set about the arrangements for a new journey with a dispatch and far-sightedness that even Baker could hardly have equalled. He planned to circumnavigate Lake Victoria and thus establish whether or not it was one great lake and whether or not the stream pouring out at Ripon Falls was its only outlet. Next he proposed to put Burton's theories to the ultimate test by sailing around Lake Tanganyika in the same way. Finally he planned to get a boat on the Lualaba and follow it downstream wherever it led until he reached the mouth. In short, he was going to make a last



Dr. David Livingstone.

settlement, not only of the Nile, but of the whole pattern of lakes and rivers in Central Africa.

As a first step towards this extraordinarily bold design he managed to get the New York *Herald* to combine with the London *Daily Telegraph* in financing him (which they did handsomely) and then in England he settled down to reading every scrap of information about East and Central Africa he could find. The companions he chose to take with him on the journey were not companions at all, but hired assistants who came from working-class families and who knew nothing about Africa. There were two young sons of a Kentish

fisherman, Francis John Pocock and Edward Pocock, and a clerk named Frederick Barker who had happened to catch Stanley's eye at the Langham Hotel in London. All three were much younger than Stanley and were chosen, one fancies, for their toughness and sense of discipline—the sort of qualities that make a good sergeant in the army. None of them was in the least likely to come home and write books about his adventures or to dispute Stanley's views in the Royal Geographical Society. When five dogs had been purchased the little party was complete and it sailed for East Africa in August 1874.

The expedition that set out from Zanzibar early in the following November was the largest and best equipped explorer's caravan that had ever been seen in East Africa. They had with them a forty-foot wooden boat, the *Lady Alice*, which had been built in sections for portage; there were also eight tons of stores and three hundred and fifty-six men. It was an unwieldy procession that stretched out for half a mile along the forest paths and by the time Stanley got it onto the shores of Lake Victoria three and a half months later, Edward Pocock was dead of typhus and a hundred men had been lost through desertion, sickness, and skirmishes with the local tribes. Such was to be the pattern of all Stanley's marches: the quick advance, the shooting down of any African tribes that opposed him, the heavy loss of life among his own men and the final attainment of the objective. For anyone to accompany Stanley on an expedition in Africa was rather like being in the *corps d'élite* of a successful general. Anything less like Livingstone's journeys cannot be imagined.

They reached the south shore of Lake Victoria at a little Arab village slightly to the west of Mwanza where Speke, sixteen years before, had first seen the great stretch of water and had indulged in his guess that it was the source of the Nile. Stanley was not a guesser. He was here to find facts and he at once assembled the *Lady Alice* on the shore. Leaving the two surviving Englishmen and the bulk of his expedition behind him, he set sail with a picked band of eleven Africans on March 8, 1875. They travelled up the eastern shore, and in three weeks' hard sailing and paddling arrived at Speke's Ripon Falls. Presently a dignitary in a red robe came forward to meet them with gifts of bullocks and other presents; and on April 5, 1875, Stanley was conducted into Mutesa's presence.

Great changes had taken place in Buganda since Speke's day. Its population had risen to something like three million, and the little

kingdom stretched for about a hundred and fifty miles along the northwestern shore of the lake. Mutesa was now in his early forties, and Stanley describes him as "a tall, clean-faced, large-eyed, nervous-looking thin man," clad in a tarboosh, a black robe and a white shirt belted with gold. He shook hands warmly with his visitor, addressed him in fluent Swahili and invited him to take a seat on an iron stool. The capital, now moved to a different site nearby called Rubaga, was a considerable settlement that covered the hills for several miles around, and there were splendid huts for visiting caravans. Guns had become a commonplace in Buganda, and Mutesa could now deploy a force of 150,000 warriors in addition to his fleet of war canoes on the lake. His personal retinue had grown larger than ever—Stanley estimated the horde of wives at two hundred or more—and all manner of manufactured objects were to be seen about the palace, bales of cotton cloths, wooden stools to sit on, steel knives and other tools, and ornaments of Venetian beads. There was no longer any evidence of murders and atrocities taking place about the court.

Stanley was enchanted. It was quite impossible, he declared later, to reconcile Speke's description of Mutesa and his brutalities with this intelligent and affable man. Mutesa had been taking an interest in Mohammedanism, and Stanley resolved at once that the king must be converted to Christianity, and he actually began a series of Bible readings at the court. Mutesa listened willingly.

In fact no radical change had taken place in Mutesa's nature, but his nineteen years on the throne had done a great deal to polish his natural talents as a politician. He had long since realized that there were other powerful states outside his own little world in Central Africa, and that there was every advantage to be had in befriending them; they could supply him with the guns and ammunition with which to fight off Kamrasi and his other enemies. Their inventions and their ideas could be very useful in Buganda. And so, for the moment, all was peace and friendship at the court. The king and the explorer had their daily meetings in an increasingly cordial atmosphere, until the time came for Stanley to continue his voyage round the lake.

On May 6, 1875, Stanley was back at Mwanza after a voyage of one thousand miles and fifty-seven days, and it was now proved beyond all doubt that the Victoria Nyanza was a single lake. Speke had been right. Moreover, this voyage had established that the lake had only one major outlet—at the Ripon Falls—and only one major intake—



Henry Morton Stanley.
“A man of iron.”

the Kagera River that flowed in on the west coast, north of Karagwe.

“... Speke,” Stanley wrote, “has now the full glory of having discovered the largest inland sea on the continent of Africa, also its principal affluent as well as its outlet. I must also give him credit for having understood the geography of the countries we travelled through better than any of those who so persistently opposed his hypothesis...” One observes that Stanley is not yet quite ready to concede that Speke’s Nile is the true Nile; still, he is beginning to approach that conclusion.

He was now ready to explore the Tanganyika Lake thoroughly. In July 1875 he put his whole expedition into canoes on Lake Victoria, and sailed north again to Buganda. His force was much depleted—Frederick Barker, the clerk from the Langham Hotel, had died at Mwanza and others had deserted or fallen ill—but Mutesa had promised to supply him with reinforcements.

First, however, Stanley had a score to settle with the natives on the island of Bumbire, which lies off the western shore of the lake, somewhat south of the present town of Bukoba. On his journey south from Buganda in the *Lady Alice* he had been roughly handled by these natives, and now, coming into sight of the island again, he had his revenge. He was fortunate to be joined just at this moment by a fleet of Mutesa’s war canoes which had come south looking for him. Between two and three thousand Bumbire spearmen unwisely appeared on the shore, and Stanley, his little fleet of canoes in position, delivered a broadside with his guns. Those of the enemy who were not killed or wounded, scattered and fled. Continuing northwards again Stanley joined Mutesa himself at the Ripon Falls, where a second battle was fought against another mutinous island.

One wonders why it was that Stanley got so heavily involved with a man who was at once so savage and so crudely cynical. Perhaps he was bound to seek Mutesa's alliance in order to complete his circumnavigation of the lake, but the reward he received for his intervention in the Buganda wars was as empty as Mutesa's profession of interest in Christianity: the promised reinforcements naturally bolted at the first opportunity, leaving the explorer to continue on his own.

One must remember of course that Stanley was still only thirty-four and that Livingstone's brief spell of influence upon him had to contend with all the experience of his earlier years, in which he had found the world a harsh and ruthless place. Yet when he came to write about the Bumbire massacre—and he had ample time to reflect before doing so—he related the story with truculence, almost with an air of defying the reader. "... The savage," he wrote, "only respects force, power, boldness and decision...."

No one was going to dispute the fact that life *was* very tough in Central Africa, and that often violent methods were needed if the explorer was going to survive; but it was not wise to make a virtue of this, and to many people in England it seemed that the Bumbire incident bore a strong resemblance to the massacre Livingstone had witnessed at Nyangwe; and it was an additional cause for offence that he had gone into action carrying the Union Jack as his banner. Only the most insensitive of men could have failed to see that all this was going to cause an outcry in England. But insensitiveness was part of Stanley's strength; he simply did not care. And in his plain work of exploration he was superb.

He accepted with equanimity the loss of the escort which Mutesa had given him, and turned south into Karagwe. Here he spent a month with Rumanika at Bweranyange. Rumanika was growing old—indeed, Stanley was the last white man to see him alive, for he died soon after this. Apparently his mind became overwhelmed by the death of a favourite son and by the misery caused by an affliction in his eye, and he committed suicide.

Rumanika had been kind to Speke and Grant, and now once again he received Stanley with every form of hospitality. It was with some pride that he produced the gun which Speke had given him so many years before, and it is not difficult to picture him standing there holding it in his hand, a giant of a man, well over six foot in height, dressed a little pathetically in a red blanket. Rumanika had been cruel enough in his time, destroying other claimants to his

throne, but he was less scheming and less brutal than Mutesa (whom he never met), and he possessed a dignity that did not depend upon his strutting about in imitation of a lion.

Restored by his month's rest in these surroundings, Stanley pushed on southwards to Lake Tanganyika, and in June 1876 he launched the *Lady Alice* at Ujiji. In under two months he was back, bringing certain evidence that the lake had no outlet which could possibly be described as the source of the Nile. With this, Burton's theories finally collapsed, and Speke at last was master of the field.

There remained now the third matter to clear up: what was Livingstone's Lualaba River and where did it flow? If it was not the Nile, how did it fit into the great pattern of the Central African rivers? In August 1876, with his expedition reduced to less than half its original size, Stanley set out on this last and greatest adventure.

The story of Stanley's voyage in the *Lady Alice* down the Lualaba and the Congo to the Atlantic is one of the great epics of African adventure. For many months he had no notion of where the river was eventually to take him—it might have been northwards into Egypt or anywhere into the vast unexplored regions to the south—but having once started he had to go on. Stanley's account of the voyage in *Through the Dark Continent* reads like some chronicle of the early Spanish conquistadors in South America, for he was overtaken by every possible disaster: shipwreck and starvation, the attacks of the riverside tribes and the loss of all his supplies, and finally the drowning of his last surviving white companion, Frank Pocock. Nine hundred and ninety-nine days after leaving Zanzibar the survivors emerged like ghosts from the jungles at the mouth of the Congo, and here a little community of European traders brought them back to life again. Of Stanley's original three hundred and fifty-six followers only one hundred and fourteen remained (including thirteen women and their children) and these were taken back by sea to Zanzibar.

All the essential questions had now been answered: the Lualaba joined the Congo and flowed across Africa into the Atlantic. The Nile rose in Lake Victoria and flowed north to Egypt and the Mediterranean. The blank space on the map was a blank no longer. It would still be argued, of course, that the ultimate source of the Nile must be at the headwaters of the main stream that feeds Lake Victoria—the Kagera—and in fact there is a just-perceptible drift of water from the mouth of the Kagera across the northwestern corner of the lake to the Ripon Falls (or rather what used to be the Ripon Falls before the hydro-electric dam was constructed there in the

nineteen-fifties). And if we follow the Kagera and its tributaries upstream for some hundreds of miles we find that its ultimate beginning lies in mountains over six thousand feet high to the north of Lake Tanganyika. Thus Burton was very nearly right when he argued that the true source of the river would be found in these regions. But surely this is too fine a definition: if the argument were carried to its logical conclusion it would have to be admitted that the river begins in the rains of the sky itself and that Homer was right when he spoke of the "Jove-descended Nile". For ordinary purposes it would seem most sensible to accept the site of the Ripon Falls as the source, since it is only from there that the mighty river confines itself to a definite course, at first northwards through Lake Kyoga to Central Uganda, then westwards over the Karuma and Murchison Falls to Lake Albert, then generally northwards again through the rapids of Equatoria, the swamps of the Sudd and the deserts of the south Sudan to its junction with the Blue Nile at Khartoum; then on again for thousands of miles through a vast waste of sand until it reaches the pyramids and the green delta of Egypt.

With Stanley's return to Zanzibar in 1877 it could be said that the exploration of the White Nile was ended.



ALAN MOOREHEAD was born in Melbourne in 1910, the son of a journalist. After taking a degree at Melbourne University, he forsook a career in law to stride out in his father's footsteps. In 1937, he came to London and joined the *Daily Express*. He served as a foreign correspondent, and later as a war correspondent, over most of Europe. His *African Trilogy* and *Eclipse* were recognized as some of the best reporting to come out of the war. He was mentioned twice in dispatches and awarded the OBE.

Since the war he has travelled extensively, and he now has two homes, one in London and the other in Italy. His writing has included travel books, biographies, novels, and some remarkable histories, notably his two famous books about African exploration, *The White Nile* and *The Blue Nile*.

When, in 1941, Russell Braddon volunteered to fight for his country, he expected to participate in swift and glorious victory. Instead, the young Australian found himself involved in the disastrous manoeuvres of the Malayan campaign; and after the fall of Singapore, so scantily defended that Churchill described it as "an almost naked island", he was captured by the Japanese.

Moved from one camp to another, forced to do backbreaking labour under appalling conditions, the prisoners died in their hundreds. For almost four years their Japanese captors—believing that only death could redeem those who had so "dishonourably" surrendered—subjected them to the most pitiless and demoralizing ill-treatment. But Braddon and his comrades were determined to win through. Movingly written, with humour and understatement, The Naked Island is the story of their courageous struggle to survive.

The Fourteenth Step (January 1942)

THERE WERE TWENTY-TWO STEPS altogether from the courtyard of the gaol up to the cells. I had got into the habit of counting those steps. Made them seem shorter, or easier. And at the fourteenth I stopped, done in. Because I could ascend no further, I lowered myself onto the step above me and took stock of my surroundings.

At the foot of the stairs, barely visible in the gloom, sat the sentry—steel-helmeted, knees wide apart, rifle and bayonet across his knees. Silent, unintelligent, unfriendly. Beyond him a small courtyard about thirty yards square. Round the courtyard ran a high prison wall—sheer and made unscaleable by five or six rows of loose-piled bricks balanced twenty feet up on its top.

Above my head, all along the balcony which ran from the top of the stairs round three sides of the ancient block of cells, the darkness was restless with the small sounds of men who slept neither comfortably nor well. And at my feet, also on the staircase, lying doubled up over three or four steps, sprawled a half-naked soldier—an Argyll: I recognized from his cap which, last of his possessions, he wore even at night.

I had passed him on the way down to the latrines. Then, he had writhed on the stairs with the griping pains of dysentery; and, having lost all control of his bowels, his legs were fouled and his pride outraged.

"Anything I can do, Jock?" I had asked him.

"Och, man, leave me alone," he had exclaimed. I regretted my intrusion. That was the trouble nowadays; one was never alone, not even on a prison staircase in the early hours of the morning.

"Sorry," I muttered, and, stepping over him, continued on down to the sentry.

"*Benjo ka?*" I asked him.

"*Benjo hei,*" he grunted. Permission granted, I crossed the twenty feet of maggot-ridden mud to the latrine. Soon I returned. In accordance with instructions, I thanked the sentry.

"*Arigato,*" I said, to which he replied, uninterestedly, "*Okay ga.*"

I had walked to the stairs; climbed them slowly; passed the young Argyll (without speaking) and then stopped—exhausted—at the fourteenth step.

I looked at the sprawled figure again, and decided then that, since I too was incapable of moving, I could now decently address him.

“How are you doing, Jock?” I asked. He didn’t answer. He didn’t seem resentful of the intrusion, however, so I persisted, with a feeble attempt at humour: “Toss you for who carries who up the rest of the stairs,” I said—and again he didn’t answer.

I knew then what had happened: the Argyll was dead. Weaker than ever, I leaned back. The Argyll was about my age, perhaps a little younger, perhaps twenty. I reflected that only recently I had taken the exuberance of youth entirely for granted. I reflected that only a fortnight ago I should never have considered mounting these stairs any other way than two at a time. Now, one by one, counting idiotically, I had crawled up: and—finally—had bogged down altogether at number fourteen.

In the dark, on the stairs, resting my elbows on my knees, my forehead on my fists, I gave myself over to misery. I found myself retracing in my mind the sequence of events which had led me to this staircase between the punishment cells and the courtyard of Pudu Gaol in Kuala Lumpur, the town that had once been the administration centre of British Malaya.

Chapter One

During the first months of the war, I had volunteered for the Australian Imperial Forces, only to be told to go away and get my mother’s consent, and finish my university course. Accordingly, I had obtained my mother’s consent and passed my exams, and become a Bachelor of Arts. This, to my limited intelligence, did not appear an excessively helpful contribution to the Empire’s war effort, so, at the beginning of 1941, I had returned to the Sydney recruiting office, determined this time to enlist and kill many Germans. And there, outside the small wooden hut, stood a brass band playing martial airs in a jolly attempt to convince young Australians that war was just one long march by Sousa.

Irritated, I stopped short. If I was going to join up, I was going to join up of my own accord. I was *not* going to be wafted into the army on the end of any conductor’s baton, however magnificent his

moustache or innumerable his campaign ribbons. Stubbornly I strolled away up the hill, caught the tram to Bondi Beach and went for a swim.

Next day, early in the morning, I ran down to the recruiting office. And there, once again, the sun glinting on the silver of epaulettes and the gold of instruments, was the band! Again I went for a swim. Every day for a week the band was there and every day for a week, while others joined up, I went swimming.

Then at last the band vanished, and in I marched, into the small hut. The recruiting sergeant greeted me in a bluff and congenial manner that had all the roguish humour of a commercial traveller and all the sincerity of a pawnbroker.

"Hullo there, laddy," he said, "going to join our army?" I nodded. "How old are you, laddy?" he asked. I said, "Twenty," and he said, "Tell it to the marines, laddy, tell it to the marines. Eighteen years ago you wouldn't even have been a gleam in your father's eye, now would you, eh?" I didn't answer. I simply placed on the table before him a form signed by my mother—the form which rendered minors eligible for enlistment.

"Mother's signed this," he observed. "Why not your father?"

"Died eight years ago," I told him. At this the sergeant appeared embarrassed and started pounding his pockets in the manner of all smokers who know quite well that they have no cigarettes but wish to give the impression that this is a fact they have only just discovered. Finally he turned to me and said: "Got a cigarette to spare, laddy?" I said I was sorry, but I didn't smoke.

Making the best of it, he laughed abruptly and—invariably—remarked, "Don't smoke, don't drink and don't go out with bad women." He then turned to the private who was the clerk in the office, and said peremptorily, "Give us a fag, Snowy," and Snowy, with considerable ill grace, passed him over a cigarette. The sergeant lit up, inhaled deeply, and then—tiring for the moment of swelling His Majesty's Forces—stepped out of the office.

"Be back in half an hour, Snowy," he said. "You, laddy," he added, "you come back at two and we'll have transport for you over to Victoria Barracks." Another cloud of smoke and he was gone.

Snowy, too, turned his back on me and began gloomily going through a vast pile of army forms. Ignored by all in my latest attempt to fight the Germans, I followed the sergeant's example and stepped out into the sunlight.

All of these trivial incidents were to control my destiny. As I

stepped out of the hut, I was hailed by a boyhood friend who, looking most surprised, said, "You joining up?" and when I nodded, asked, "What branch?"

"What do you mean, what branch?" I demanded. It had frankly never occurred to me that armies had branches.

"Well," he explained, "infantry, artillery, ASC, sappers—what branch?"

"I don't know," I assured him, "they haven't told me. Infantry, I suppose." This appeared to shock him greatly. The infantry, apparently, were not at all a good thing, just foot-sloggers. "You'd better come up and see Dad," he told me, and so, being an obliging youth, I went up and saw Dad.

Dad was a solicitor "You'd better join your father's old artillery unit," he said firmly. "I know the CO. I'll contact him and get him to apply for you at Victoria Barracks."

Thus was my entire future settled by the playing of brass bands, the sudden desire of a recruiting sergeant for a smoke rather than an immediate recruit, and the firm pulling of strings by an old friend of the family.

ARRIVED AT VICTORIA BARRACKS, we recruits (there were about a dozen of us that day) were greeted with overwhelming bonhomie by another sergeant, a middle-aged man with less charm than stomach—the latter being firmly girt up by a pair of vast trousers and yards of webbing belt. He had had a ready line of jovial patter. "Just this way, son," he had said. "You'll be all right, me boy," . . . "Just sit here and we'll have you fixed up before you can say Jack Robinson," . . . "Now you boys, get to know one another," . . . And finally—presumably to hasten the process of getting to know one another—"Just come this way and strip off."

So we all went that way and stripped off and for the next three quarters of an hour remained stripped off, until finally a medical orderly emerged and summoned us, one by one, to be weighed and measured. Next, in to the doctors for an examination. This done, we dressed and were hustled down to the main hall in the barracks to take the oath, which is the final act of enlistment.

Like children repeating the alphabet, we mumbled out the phrases of the oath as they were gabbled at us. And at the second upon which the last word of the oath fell from our lips, the recruiting sergeant, his bonhomie shed, started screaming: "All right now, you blokes—git fell in. C'mon, c'mon. Shake a leg or you'll be doing

some spud-bashing—you're not civvies any longer, you know." And straight away, to the accompaniment of his hysterical screams of "Left, right, left, right" and of mutinous backchat from ourselves, we ambled off to our sleeping quarters, which turned out to be the pigpens of the Royal Agricultural Showground of Sydney

These had been whitewashed with nice clean whitewash and two men moved into each pen, presumably working on the refreshing military principle that two adult males equal one prize pig.

My companion was an ex-milkman. He was about nineteen, little more than five feet in height, sported a green shirt, brown slacks, and no teeth at all. "Don't like them dentists' drills," he explained, "so I got 'em all whipped out. Bloke at Newtown done it for a quid."

I had a brief and shocking vision of the dental gentleman at Newtown whipping out thirty-two teeth for a quid. Meantime, the victim of this atrocity, apparently quite unmoved, asked me my name. Glad of the change of conversation, I said, "Russ, what's yours?" and he said, Cyril, only his friends called him Mick. "You call me Mick," he added sociably. "Well, where to now?"

I suggested a swim, and took my trunks out of the small suitcase I'd brought with me.

"Aw Jesus," said Mick, "I haven't got any togs."

"Hire some down there," I suggested.

Mick shook his head. "Can't," he explained. "Got no dough."

"That's all right," I told him. "I've got twelve bob." For a second Mick looked quite embarrassed at this offer, and then grinned a completely toothless grin.

"You got a mate with you?" he queried. I said I hadn't.

"What say we stick together then?" he suggested. I thought it was a good idea.

"Right," concluded Mick. "Let's go for a swim."

We headed out of the barracks. "Leave pass?" demanded the guard at the gate.

"Don't be bloody ridiculous," Mick told him, his expression outraged at this liberty, and off we sailed to Bondi.

After the last of the day's sun, we returned penniless and happy. At the barracks the possibility of our sticking together was abruptly disposed of by the sergeant, who slouched over and asked: "You Braddon?" and, when I nodded, said, "Well, report to the office: you've been requisitioned by the artillery."

"What about Mick?" I demanded.

"Never 'eard of him," replied the sergeant. "Who's Mick?"

I pointed at the ex-milkman. "This bloke."

"Miserable little runt, aren't you?" observed the sergeant.

"Least I can see me boots over me guts," replied Mick with spirit.

"Now cut that out, mate," rebuked our warrior of the orderly room. "You just git down to the cookhouse double smart or you'll find yourself on a charge. And you, Braddon, you report to the office." He thrust his stomach out an extra foot to emphasize both his point and his authority.

For a moment Mick glared mutinously. Then he shrugged. "Better do what the bastard says," he concluded. He held out his hand and said, "Goodbye, mate, don't do anything I wouldn't do," and, having shaken hands, off he went. It was the last time I ever saw him.

AT THE OFFICE I FOUND three other men who had also been requisitioned to the artillery. We were equipped with uniforms that didn't fit and boots that didn't bend and two pairs each of long woollen underpants. Then we were ordered to proceed to Central Station and catch a train to Liverpool, forty-five minutes away.

We found that town swarming with both militiamen and Free French troops—and with ladies anxious to pick up either—but no one at all concerned with us. We were, by that time, however, developing considerable initiative in these matters. We knew that we had to get to the camp of the 2/15th Field Regiment at Holdsworth. We therefore walked the town till we found one of the regiment's trucks and then clambered aboard. We sat in it for an hour till its crew returned, then we drove out with them to Holdsworth, having refused to be evicted by them.

In a surprisingly short time, although no one in the regiment had expected us or been warned of our arrival, we were given a meal, a cup of hot cocoa, a palliasse on which to lie, and a tent in which to sleep.

For the first time I felt that I was really in the army and wondered what the subsequent days of training would bring.

VERY QUICKLY I found out. They brought weeks of Rookie training from an NCO whose knowledge of textbook soldiering was as intimate as his language was bawdy. There were endless lectures on the art of stripping down both rifles and machineguns. The same NCO could strip and re-mount a Lewis machinegun blindfold and

with heavy gloves on. He could also play the piano blindfold and with heavy gloves on. He would do either at the drop of a hat and of the two operations he was prouder of the latter, though the former was infinitely the more artistic.

The weeks drew on. I peeled about one million pounds of potatoes and learned how to crawl out of the back fence of the camp so that I could go absent without leave. I heard sufficient foul language to deter me from using anything but the King's English. I absorbed the principles and practice of field gunnery. Moreover one day I was paid. The possibility of being paid in the army had frankly never occurred to me. Five shillings a day it was. I was most surprised.

Finally I was transferred into battery headquarters to learn the more precise art of ranging the guns onto their targets. Here I slept in a galvanized iron hut which, in those winter months, was so freezing that the occupants retired at night dressed in every single article of their clothing issue, not excluding the two pairs of long woollen underpants.

I soon came to like most of the men in the hut. Four of them had enlisted together from an accountants' firm—Piddington, Magee, Shackle, Robinson. Of them only Piddington was to survive the war. Then there were the two Icetons—Johnny and Bluey, who was called Bluey, in the Australian fashion, because he had red hair. They had not known each other before their army days and had met in the regiment quite by chance. They became inseparable friends. Johnny was to be killed; Bluey was to lose an arm. Then there was Rosenberg, a solicitor of nearly forty. He was a pleasant soul with a passion for slide-rule computations—which took him hours—and for shaving with a cutthroat razor and no mirror—which he did in a matter of seconds. He died in Thailand. There was also Hugh Moore, who had been at the university with me and who was to share in many of the unpleasant events which subsequently befell me.

Within a few months, our regiment became extremely efficient and wanted to put its efficiency to some purpose. At last, in July 1941, we were given our final embarkation leave and everyone went home to say "Goodbye" before departing overseas for the serious business of war.

MY OWN FAREWELLS turned out to be completely unsatisfactory. Having determined to have no fuss, and my mother, sister Pat, and stepfather having determined likewise, no one mentioned the subject

of my impending departure until the actual second when I left. Then, with everything unsaid, I found myself kissing my mother goodbye in the garage, both of us incapable of speech, whilst the dog rushed round and round, barking hysterically and asking for its ball to be thrown.

I got into the family car and drove off. As I ran down the hill, I saw my mother staring after me, dry-eyed and smiling hard—no doubt pondering deeply on this absurd culmination to twenty years of parental devotion. For my part, I was neither dry-eyed nor smiling. I drove to my stepfather's office and he drove me on to the station, where the leave train waited. Tactfully he talked in quiet tones all the way and never once looked at me.

When we parted on the station, he said, "Don't worry about your mother. I'll look after her." I could have kissed him. Instead I nodded mutely again, shook his hand and clambered into the train.

A WEEK LATER, a week of intense security during which no one was allowed to leave Holdsworth camp, we "embussed". This hideous word was the invention of some military genius and meant simply that we got aboard trucks.

Having "embussed", we travelled the few miles to Liverpool railway station. There we "debussed" and "entrained". The train then chugged erratically down to Darling Harbour, where we "detrained" and "embarked". The entire operation proceeded with a smoothness which, for the army, was quite startling. Everything had been done with a maximum of secrecy to prevent spies from getting any information.

Thus it was that, still shrouded in security, we stole furtively down Sydney Harbour accompanied by at least a hundred small craft bearing friends and relatives and large placards with "Good luck, Bill Smith, of the 2/15th" or "Whacko Bluey of the 2/29th" or "Bon Voyage 8th Div. AIF"—the passengers of these small craft having presumably obtained their extremely accurate information about the Australian Imperial Forces by crystal gazing.

As the last of the accompanying launches began to fall away, the whole ship broke into "The Maoris' Farewell"—a traditional song of Australians departing their country. Several thousand voices caught up the melody: voices in the small craft joined them: voices from the foreshores joined in again. With the sun behind our celebrated Harbour Bridge, we passed out of Sydney Harbour—it was a moving scene. The Eighth Division were off to the wars.

Chapter Two

The voyage from Sydney, on the east coast of Australia, to Fremantle, on the west, was uneventful except for the unfriendly state of the sea in the Great Australian Bight. Black, arctic waters raged at us and no one was very happy. Some, in fact, like Bombardier Rosenberg of the slide-rule computations and the mirrorless shaving, laid themselves down to die. Indeed, Rosie's case was the cause of acute amusement to all except Rosie, because with typical caution and forethought he had equipped himself with anti-seasickness pills sufficient for months of travelling. Observing some small waves just out of Sydney's Heads, however, he had devoured the lot before we had even turned the bottom of Australia. Devoid of both pills and nourishment, utterly without hope, he abandoned himself to the sea and longed for death.

Instead of death, however, came Fremantle—sunny and vastly hospitable. At once everyone, even Rosie, revived and went ashore for a last night out on Australian soil. The cause of "security" was greatly enhanced by a flood of telephone calls, telegrams and letters from western Australia across to the eastern states, everyone making categorical statements about our destination, no two statements ever seeming to agree.

The wiser ones, however, pointed out, with considerable logic, that in the holds of our ships were vehicles; and that those vehicles were all painted bright yellow; and that bright yellow was a natural camouflage in desert. By morning, when the entire division had transhipped into three Dutch vessels, this view had prevailed over all others and everyone wrote off letters assuring those at home that we were destined for the Middle East. One hopes profoundly that the much-feared spies steamed open and read all these letters because, of course, we at once departed from Australia—complete with our bright yellow trucks—and headed for the dark green jungles of Malaya.

THE DUTCH VESSELS were not nice. I cannot remember which deck it was on our particular ship to which we were consigned, but, working on the principle that decks are lettered alphabetically and that the one *furthest* from the keel is A, I should say that we were on about Z +3.

Certainly we crawled down multitudinous steps into the bowels of

this abominable boat until eventually there were no more steps to descend, and on our left we observed the galleys, whilst, on our right, low-roofed and reeking with the fumes of cooking and diesel oil, we observed our quarters. These contained rows of wooden benches at which one ate: two feet above them rows of hammocks in which one slept: adjoining them a large Dutch lavatory, and a small Dutch bathroom, outside which one queued interminably.

AS WE STEAMED steadily northwards the weather grew steadily warmer and the food steadily fouler. In spite of the army's attempts to keep us occupied with PT, medical parades, kit inspections and mortar drill, the days managed to be exciting because ahead lay uncertainty.

Conversation reverted more and more frequently to the possibility of Japan's entering the war (because, as soldiers in Malaya, our only opportunity of seeing active service would be against a Japanese invader). In fact, a war with Nippon gave no indication of being very exciting, if one listened to what the intelligence officer said in his lectures. Apparently the Japanese were very small and very myopic and thus totally unsuited to tropical warfare. Nor was this all. They had aeroplanes made from old kettles and kitchen utensils, guns salvaged from the war against Russia in 1905 and rifles of the kind used by civilized peoples only in films about the Red Indians. Also, they were frightened of the dark.

Regretfully we resigned ourselves to a war without battles, where our sole function was to guard the Empire's greatest source of tin and rubber. Meantime the floating septic tank which was both the pride of the Dutch merchant marine and our transport made its way steadily towards a small diamond-shaped island at the bottom of Malaya, which was universally known as the impregnable fortress of Singapore.

INTO THIS IMPREGNABLE FORTRESS we steamed early on the morning of August 15. Four years later—to the very day—the war in the Pacific was to end. Very few of the two infantry battalions and the regiment of artillery who waited on the steaming decks that day were to see this fourth anniversary of their arrival in Singapore. Two thirds of them were to die in a last-ditch battle on the west coast of Malaya; of the remainder, many were to fall on the Thailand railway.

Once ashore, we clambered aboard waiting lorries and sped off through the city of Singapore. Driving through Singapore for the

first time was an experience. There were the vivid colours of tropical flowers in parks; the incredible stench of fish drying on the pavements, each fragrant morsel the target of a million flies; the bamboo poles slung out from each side of the street, on which was suspended much native washing rather indifferently laundered; and in the streets, everywhere, a bedlam of fowls, rickshaws and natives, through which all vehicles careered as fast as possible.

Turning right, we sped into a less chaotic thoroughfare and were touched (though surprised, since our journey had been so secret) to observe, slung from one side of it to the other, a huge banner bearing the words, "Welcome to the AIF". Our driver, a youthful English private, grinned.

"What's the joke?" we asked. He pointed down the road over which the banner hung.

"That's Lavender Street," he told us. Not finding this remark particularly informative, we dropped the subject. It was a week before we discovered that Lavender Street is one of the world's most notorious streets of brothels. Obviously, our security had been as superb as the reputation which went before us was high!

We were deposited a few miles out of Singapore City near some very substantial-looking English barracks. Immediately God indicated His extreme displeasure at our arrival by deluging us in a fierce downpour of lukewarm rain. Carrying our mountainous kitbags and still wearing horse-collars of rolled greatcoats, we staggered through mud and rain to our new camp. Rows of tents stood on the side of a hill in a rubber plantation. And through the tents cascaded a torrent of brown water draining off the slope.

Drenched and enervated, we made our way to the tents—four men to each one—deposited our gear inside and at once commenced digging drains round our new homes.

By nightfall we were delighted to crawl onto the native-style beds with which we had been issued. Under our nets we listened to the peevish buzz of mosquitoes and the curious insect noises of the rubber plantation. The rain had stopped and a moon came out so brilliantly that under it the guy ropes cast clearcut shadows and one could easily read one's Malayan-English dictionary. And so, having observed idly that "come" was "*mari*" and that "go" was "*pigi*", I fell asleep—our first night's sleep with the AIF. Abroad.

Next morning we were swiftly initiated into a new way of life. We were told that heat being a constant factor in the tropics, greatcoats were no longer necessary, a fact of which we had ourselves been

acutely conscious for at least twenty-four hours. Next we were told that the soil of Malaya was infested with hookworm, that this hookworm entered the body through the soles of the feet and worked its way remorselessly round one's bloodstream into one's bowels and that there it became the cause of a "slow lingering death". This slow lingering death instantly befell anyone who so much as set a bare little toe onto the earth, and was quite incurable.

Leave was the cause of some trouble in those days. Establishing friendly relationships with the garrison troops from Britain was not difficult—beer, fights, football matches and the Union Jack Club soon settled that. But establishing friendly relationships with the trading civilians and planters from Britain—that turned out to be impossible. After three weeks in Malaya we had none of us, we ordinary soldiers, spoken to a white woman (except the volunteers at the Anzac Club, who only had time to ask, "One lump or two?" as they poured one's tea). To address a European woman or girl—or, in many cases, man—anywhere in Singapore was to incur the most calculated snub

My first sally into Singapore shocked me considerably. Having lost myself in the heart of the city, I turned to the first white people I set eyes on—two women, extremely well dressed—and asked for directions.

They drew themselves up to their full height, and one announced to the other in tones of pure vinegar: "Good God, these soldiers are everywhere—let's go to the Club for a drink," and, thereupon, they swept off. I remained lost.

To extricate myself, I got into a rickshaw and said, "The Union Jack Club, please." We jogged for miles and finally took a familiar righthand turn. Suddenly I realized where I was—Lavender Street, the street of brothels. It was useless protesting to the rickshaw coolie. It didn't matter where in Singapore you boarded a rickshaw and asked to go—they always took you to Lavender Street.

But in this they were not without their wisdom. Practically every reputable hotel and eating establishment in Singapore had been put "Out of Bounds to Other Ranks", so that Lavender Street was the solution to most men's eating problems. The girls were quite reasonable and once one explained that one wanted food, not a ninety-nine-per-cent chance of contracting VD, they left one alone in peace to eat. Nevertheless, the enforced company of other soldiers or prostitutes was not the happiest solution in the world to the problems of lonely troops stationed many thousands of miles from home.

EVENTUALLY WE MOVED OUT of the camp and off the island, over the Johore Causeway which links Singapore to Malaya, and one hundred and fifty miles up-country to a small village called Tampin. There we were installed in cool, airy wooden huts, and there we stayed, very pleasantly, for almost the rest of the year. In this period we painted our bright yellow trucks a sombre shade of jungle green and resigned ourselves to the indignity of being a mortar regiment instead of a field-artillery unit. There being no hope of our receiving the guns we had been so carefully trained to use, we settled down grimly to adapt artillery principles to the firepower of three-inch mortars. Led by a vehement sultan of Johore, however, various Malayan owners had succeeded in having imposed a fine of five dollars upon any soldier who in any way damaged any rubber tree—however slightly and even though it was in the pursuit of his training. Nothing could have been more calculated to interfere with mobility and efficiency (in these predominantly rubber-growing areas) than this regulation.

On the other side of the picture, however, there was much that was delightful and praiseworthy. We were well paid, well clothed, given sufficient leave in the nearby towns of Seremban and Malacca, and we were magnificently healthy—a fact which was to save thousands of Australian lives in the long days of captivity to come.

By November 1941 we were a hardened unit, immune to the tropical heat, accustomed to the strange ways of the jungle, confident of our own ability to hit hard if the occasion arose. Our only fears were that, in the event of action, our mortar ammunition might, over the past few months, have been affected by the damp. To dispel this fear, we moved all our ammunition from one place to another, round and round the camp, taking its temperature, wiping its bottom and dusting its top with all the loving care of a mother with her first child. As events turned out, we need not have bothered; most of the mortar bombs we so jealously saved from the ravages of moisture were used by the Japanese against our own forces.

THE AUSTRALIAN TROOPS—always easy-going souls—quickly made friends with the local inhabitants, the Malays. Thus, in Tampin and Malacca and Seremban, there were always swarms of children round every Australian soldier: kids who clamoured for pennies and cigarettes and, when they got them, dutifully took the money home to mum and smoked the cigarettes with all the nonchalance of the chain-smoker.

Between the adult Malays and ourselves there also sprang up a familiarity, which can best be summed up in the invariable greeting that passed between us . . . "Hullo, Joe." All Malays, to us, were Joe. To the Malays, all Australians were Joe. This greeting—accompanied by a cheerful thumbs up—was never omitted. Whether you were in convoy, on a single truck, on a route march or on leave, when you passed a native, you grinned, and he grinned, and you both raised the right thumb and said, "Hullo, Joe." There was a warmth in this relationship of ours with the locals which partly compensated for, and partly arose out of, the fact that it was the only social relationship open to us. Forbidden, on pain almost of death, to visit or take out our own Australian nurses at Malacca, and ostracized by the vast majority of Europeans on the peninsula, we turned the full force of our frustrated conviviality upon the Malays. And they responded nobly.

And so life in Tampin proceeded, with mortar drill and manoeuvres during the day; football or hockey matches twice a week and a walk down to the village each night. There, some danced with the taxi-girls—not many dances, because they cost twenty-five cents each; some practised their Malay and grew fairly fluent; some bought native ornaments in silver and pewter and sent them home, and always there were the swarms of children—the shrill screams of "Pennies," "Cigarettes," and "Hullo, Joe." And in the tranquillity of these village interludes—for there is no hour anywhere which is more refreshing than the first cool one of the Malayan evening when the swallows and starlings settle down on the telephone wires, wing to wing for miles, to sleep till the dawn rouses them to their shrill flight—it was almost impossible to believe that a few thousand miles away the Old World was reeling, still less that in French Indo-China, China proper and Japan, millions of troops waited for the order which would shatter this village peace for four long years.

And yet there were signs of danger. When an artillery regiment can only be equipped with three-inch mortars, and when no tanks or armour are ever seen, and when only a few comparatively slow and old-fashioned planes ever ascend into the skies, and when there are virtually no automatic weapons at all and not even enough ammunition for issue to guards on sentry duty at bomb dumps—then it is obvious that all is not entirely well.

It is worth noting that—in those last weeks of peace—our regiment still had a man hiding all day behind a bush at the corner of the camp and the main road, so that whenever he saw a staff car

approaching he could blow a whistle. When he blew his whistle the routine group of men on guard duty in the guardhouse hid. They were replaced (amidst much panic on the part of the orderly officer) with a special glittering guard, who would at once fall in and present arms—thereby greatly impressing the visiting staff officer, and no doubt giving the Japanese much cause to doubt the possibility of their ever achieving a victory in Malaya.

BY THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER 1941, the Germans having moved firmly into most of western Russia and the Japanese having insinuated themselves slyly into much of South-East Asia, the atmosphere in Malaya became tenser. Everywhere training was accelerated; gasmasks were inspected almost daily; lectures were delivered on the Japanese and their habits, their methods of warfare and how to defeat them.

The intelligence officer spoke to us at great length on two subjects. First the frequent use made by the Japanese of crackers with which to frighten their enemies—especially at night. Second, the use that the Japanese would make of gas.

It is regrettable to have to relate that the Japanese never in my experience resorted to crackers—apparently working on the old-fashioned principle that mortar bombs were better. Also that they used no gas—which was perhaps as well when one recollects that in answer to a question: “How do you decontaminate a twenty-five-pounder gun?” the intelligence officer had replied, “Take it to pieces, scrape the paint off it, then boil it in a petrol drum!”

ONE AFTERNOON WE WENT to Malacca to play the Army Service Corps at rugby football. The ASC fed us nobly and then annihilated us on the field. However, after the strain of the few weeks before, we enjoyed the carefree atmosphere of this regimental game and accepted our defeat quite happily. The match over, we moved into the town of Malacca to dance, eat, or sit in the cinema, according to one's mood.

At about half past ten—just when our revels in Malacca were reaching their height—the alarm was sounded! Provosts rushed round blowing whistles: officers (wearing tin hats, revolvers and urgent expressions) appeared everywhere, saying, “Get back to your camp at once,” and then vanishing again; and everywhere the rumour flashed round, “It's war.” It was not a nice feeling. Abruptly the revels ceased. The cinemas and cafés emptied. We arrived at the

camp shortly before midnight to find it seething—seething with extra guards, rumours and official indecision. Since no one would tell me what to do, I went to my hut and cleaned my rifle. On almost every bed others sat doing the same. The bed beside mine—my friend Hugh Moore's—was empty. He was in hospital with fever and I wondered how all this would affect him and when he would rejoin us.

I had just finished with the pull-through when an NCO came in and issued us each with five rounds of ammunition. Johnny Iceton looked at him in amazement. "What," he queried, "five rounds for every man in the regiment?" The NCO nodded.

"Well, then," said Johnny firmly, "it bloody *must* be war."

Next day, to set upon the situation the seal of official acknowledgment that here was a crisis, we were issued with special orders. First, one must carry one's rifle and one's five rounds of ammunition everywhere. Next, one Bren carrier arrived for each battery—nasty, inadequate vehicles with small protection from the ground and none at all from above (as the enemy were quick to demonstrate). These, with one armoured car, were to be our total mobile reply to the Japanese and their tanks. Finally, the regiment was presented with some twenty-five pounders, beautiful English guns, still thick with the grease that had been plastered on them to protect them on their journey from factories in Britain. There were not sufficient of them, it was admitted; but they were a delightful piece of mechanism. Quickly each gun was cleaned by volunteers of its protective grease and polished till it was spotless.

The enemy meantime appeared to dally; so we, perhaps to deter him, were ordered to proceed at once to battle stations.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE ENTIRE REGIMENT was accomplished at night with a maximum of enthusiasm and a minimum of efficiency. Convoys howled off, with trucks at thirty-yard intervals and no headlights. The regiment was split up into numerous small units and sent out to protect and provide firepower for various aerodromes. The beautiful new twenty-five pounders were left behind at Tampin to be guarded by a small rearguard.

Badly briefed and hurriedly assembled, these various convoys roared out of the area they knew so well and, armed with bully beef and mortars, swiftly proceeded to lose themselves. Before morning, however, each convoy had found at least one aerodrome to guard and was assiduously staring into the gloom lest enemy paratroopers descended unobserved. This situation was in no way

improved by the news that Pearl Harbor had that day been devastated by the Japanese.

It turned out to be typical of the war our staff planned that its initial stages were devoted entirely to the anticipation of an airborne invasion—which invasion, in fact, never came and was never even intended.

It was also typical of the war our staff planned that the Allied Conference of 1940 on the defence needs of Malaya had decided upon a minimum of forty battalions with full support (including armour and tanks) *for the northern or Thailand frontier alone*, plus five hundred and sixty-six first-line planes. In actual fact, there were only thirty-two battalions in all of Malaya, there were only one hundred and forty-one planes (none of them up to international standard) and there were no tanks at all. When the attack came, on December 8, 1941, the Argylls and the Leicesters and 11th Indian Division, on the northern frontier, were quickly pulped and scattered in a thousand different directions by incessant tank-supported attacks. And so—within the first days of the campaign—the initiative was handed to the enemy, and the disastrous retreat to destruction had begun. . . .

Of this, however, on that momentous night of December 8, my unit was blissfully unaware. Having recovered from our irritation at leaving behind our treasured twenty-five pounders, we had careered on all night to the east coast—for we had to reach Mersing before dawn or (the intelligence officer said) be wiped out by aerial attacks on the road.

With the loss of only two trucks overturned on Malaya's narrow winding roads, we passed through Mersing, were rushed to the river bank and there met by the navy. The navy had barges and light rivercraft. Into these we loaded about 10,000 mortar bombs, our food and equipment and—with one company of infantry—proceeded up the river to what had once been a Japanese-owned mine called Bukit Langkap.

Bukit Langkap was a mountain of red clay, cut into opencast mining terraces and ravines. Access to its summit had been by a railway which the Japanese owners had, before they departed, thoughtlessly destroyed. The only alternative route was a narrow goat track which ran up alongside the railway.

Up this track, therefore, from the barges on the river to the summit of the mountain, we man-handled our 10,000 mortar bombs and our mortars. It was raining. After the first mile-long trip made

by each of the troops' hundred-odd men, the track turned from wet clay to an orange ribbon of grease. Nevertheless, we eventually got all the bombs up to the top of the mountain. Even then there was no rest. We dug slit trenches and mortar pits: cleared lanes of fire: laid signal wires and took the bearings of all likely targets—an operation made none the easier by the fact that (because of the ore in all the rocks) no two compasses ever gave the same reading and no one compass ever produced even similar results twice running.

In the midst of these exertions we heard over our wireless that the battleships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* had been sunk off the east Malayan coast—sunk because they had inadequate aerial and light craft support for capital ships. Sick with the realization that the British navy had suffered its first real defeat in history and that we in Malaya were now obviously without any substantial naval protection against the landing of enemy convoys, we turned back to our burrowings into the side of the mountain of clay.

The next day I wrote to Hugh Moore—still in hospital at Malacca—and asked him what were his chances of rejoining us. As I took the letter down to our troop officer to be censored (even if there were no chance of its being posted), the three Dutch Wilderbeestes which passed our way daily and seemed to be our only air force in this part of Malaya lumbered slowly overhead—bound for Kota Bahru where the Japanese had landed. We had come to have an affection for these three antiquated aircraft. It was sad that within a matter of days they should all have been blasted out of the skies by the swarms of Japanese Zeros which protected the convoy they had been sent to attack.

Soon we were ordered to abandon the mine and return to Mersing. The same barges collected us, escorted by the same naval rivercraft. The same equipment was loaded onto them and, at Mersing, taken off them. Then, in great haste, we rushed to Kluang Aerodrome—it was about to be attacked, we were told, by paratroops.

At Kluang we made a dump for all our bombs, dug slit trenches for ourselves and pits for our mortars, made a new road through the rubber for our vehicles and all the time waited for the enemy troops to come floating down. We celebrated Christmas Day with a large dinner and the following day with a heavy air raid by twenty-seven Japanese bombers, in the course of which many bombs but never a parachute landed on the aerodrome.

On the same day our regiment received fresh orders. We were to

be reconstituted as a three-battery regiment instead of a two-battery one. The new battery was to be called the 65th. All batteries were to be equipped with field guns and take up fresh battle stations.

So, abandoning our mortars and the nice new road, we of the new 65th moved off, in swift convoy and armed with twenty-five pounders. We travelled one hundred miles across to the west coast of Malaya to a rendezvous outside a town we had never even heard of called Muar. Eventually we were to know it quite well.

THE POSITION AS IT WAS at that time was then put to us by our intelligence officer—who assured us that he wanted to “put us in the picture”. Even as painted by the intelligence officer, the “picture” was no rosy landscape; it appeared that at least half of Malaya—following the slaughter of the British troops and the 11th Indian Division by Japanese tanks—had been systematically abandoned. The loss of Kuala Lumpur, administrative centre of the Malay States, was glossed over by the sudden announcement that it had been declared an Open City. And now, it was asserted, Australian fighting troops were to take the brunt of the Japanese onslaught on a line which extended across Malaya from Muar on the west coast, to Mersing on the east. The calamitous losses which the retreat to this line inevitably involved were dismissed without any reference at all.

Least of all did the report see fit to inform us that in the precipitate evacuation of Penang, high up on the west coast, hundreds of small craft (launches, junks, fishing boats—vessels of every description) had been left intact for the use of the swarming troops of the enemy. Not having this interesting fact before us, we decided that the Japanese must come down the mainland. He must come down the mainland, we thought, because he had no boats in which to come down the shallow waters of the west coast.

So we received orders to dig in on the southern bank of the Muar River: we were to await the frontal attack by land. The Imperial Japanese army meantime sent a force three or four times stronger than ours to march against us. This our battery awaited confidently. Of the other force which the Japanese sent by sea—in the hundreds of small craft presented to them at Penang—to sever our lines of communication, we remained in blissful ignorance.

The stage was set then for the battle which General Percival was later to describe as “...one of the most sanguinary of the Malayan campaign.”

Chapter Three

A few days later, the enemy arrived on the far side of the river. The officer in the observation post there announced calmly over his field telephone that Japanese were coming through the rubber on all sides. He ordered his assistant to escape to the river and then himself covered the latter's long run, at the same time directing fire from our guns. A few seconds later his steady voice stopped in mid-sentence and the new-formed 65th Battery had suffered its first loss.

Muar suddenly swarmed with enemy troops. Every platoon was cut off and overrun. Dive-bombers howled down hour after hour, always unopposed. In a series of furious engagements, almost all of the guns and crews fought their way out of the town and took up a new position on its outskirts.

Next morning, two battalions of Australian infantry arrived to save what was left of the Muar force and to halt the Japanese. This they did in a savage battle that same day. They swept the Japanese back from the heights and our entire force then formed a hollow square round a crossroads called Barkri. This formation the Japanese attacked that night, and penetrated. Each side of our perimeter turned inwards and fired furiously at the intruders whilst in the centre of the holocaust men fought bitter hand-to-hand battles in the blackness. When dawn came, it was found that the bullets poured so furiously inwards had gone, equally furiously, outwards to the other side of the perimeter and there settled in many an Australian limb. From that time onwards the order was that the enemy were to be engaged at night only with bayonets—and we gunners, who had previously used bayonets solely for the purpose of opening condensed-milk and bully-beef tins, now had to view these beastly weapons in a more serious light.

Attacks and counterattacks continued furiously next day, with the Australian 19th and 29th battalions more than holding their own against a division of Imperial Japanese guards. Irritated by this unexpected delay, the Japanese sent dive-bombers to scour the rubber and heavy tanks to clear the road. But the bombs achieved little and the tanks were awaited by a troop of coldly determined anti-tank gunners who allowed them to approach within twenty yards and then swiftly destroyed five of them. The enemy then lost his taste for mechanized warfare and returned to his policy of infiltration and attacks from the rear.

In full daylight the battery withdrew from Barkri crossroads about

half a mile further back. From there we were to provide our infantry with fire support. We were continuously dive-bombed. Hugh Moore was with me now, and Johnny Iceton. Our infantry, just a few hundred yards up the road, were badly mauled. Our communications with them—even over that short distance—were constantly disrupted by roving groups of enemy troops who cut field-telephone wires and machinegunned dispatch riders.

Having dug ourselves securely in, in a position that favoured us, and with our wounded tucked away in trucks in the centre of our position, we waited for the inevitable attack. The battery commander, Major Julius—a dark, stocky, bad-tempered man respectfully known (for he was a brilliant soldier) as the Black Bastard—came up, bad tempered as ever, and surveyed us, scowling.

“Good position,” he said. “Move your waterbottles into the shade, though—you’ll need every drop before we’re finished.” Then he stumped off, halted and turned round again. “By the way,” he added, “there’s a message just come up from base that tomorrow we’ll get full aerial support. They say the sky’ll be black with our planes. Pass it on. I’ve got to go to a brigade conference.” For a second he stood staring through us with a cynical lift of the eyebrow—as well he might. We had been given this same message every day for a week. So far we had seen no Allied planes at all. Abruptly he turned away and made off down to a bungalow on the edge of the *padi*, where the brigade officers were to meet.

Shortly afterwards a dive-bomber lifted angrily over the crest of the hill, roared across the *padi*, following the long line of staff cars which so sensibly led right up to the doorway of the bungalow, and dropped a large aerial torpedo straight through its roof. In the murderous scene of the wrecked and smouldering bungalow, Julius was one of the few senior officers who still lived—and he obviously would not live for long if he did not swiftly reach a casualty-clearing station of some kind. We had no casualty-clearing station. Dozens of men volunteered to try to get him back. After an ominous day’s silence from our rear headquarters, it was obvious that the road was no longer in our hands, but there were still those who were ready to attempt to get this extraordinary man to where his life might be saved.

Eventually, with Julius protesting in his customary violent language, an armoured car set out to run the gauntlet. Half an hour later a bloodied figure staggered into our perimeter. It appeared that eight hundred yards down the road their path had been blocked by fallen trees and their vehicle shot to ribbons by machineguns placed

on both banks. This was the only survivor. Wearily he sat down and men dug bullets out of his back and patched him up whilst he held his head in his hands.

Quickly the report spread that the Black Bastard was dead. Our best soldier was gone and we were now surrounded.

USING THEIR ENORMOUS SUPERIORITY of numbers and their undisputed command of the air to advantage, the Japanese now exerted more pressure. They attacked our hardpressed infantry incessantly, sending in waves of fresh troops day and night, so that the Australians got no respite and no sleep. We drew what was left of our guns back a quarter of a mile, so that they would clear the crest of the hill in front; chopped down hundreds of rubber trees and sent over a heavy barrage, under cover of which, we hoped, the infantry would be able to fight their way back to us.

Eventually they did—whereupon we learned that the situation at the crossroads had so fluctuated, between the time when the infantry had given us their position and the time when we had laid down our barrage, that most of our shells had fallen among Australians. They bore it with incredible equanimity. “Don’t matter, mate, gave us some encouragement to get back quicker. Would have been up there yet if youse hadn’t hunted us out.” Only the weary eyes told you what they really felt about this last unkind blow that had added to the already fearful toll on their numbers.

Having thus united into the one small force, we set off at once to fight our way down the road until we established contact once more with our own command and supplies. From Julius’s fate, and the fact that for days no ammunition or food had reached us, we knew that this was not going to be easy.

All the vehicles—the artillery’s tractors and few guns, the infantry’s trucks, the commandeered cars and lorries (about fifty in all)—ran nose to tail down the road. In the vehicles were packed all our wounded—seven or eight, it seemed, to each truck. Along each side of the convoy, through the rubber, in a plodding, purposeful and determined fan, strode the infantry—always with that outstretched rifle and slightly down-pointed bayonet. Every bush and shrub was prodded and cleared. Every sniper in every tree was shot down. Every small, carefully concealed machinegun nest was silenced. They made no fuss about it. They just plodded alongside, clearing our path, so that our whole unwieldy mass of men and machines ground forward in low gear, mile after mile—towards no one quite knew

what. And every inch of the way the dive-bombers roared up and down, leaving only to refuel

A cutting, long and deep, loomed ahead. In gnawing suspense we moved into it—perfect conditions for an ambush—and a mile later emerged, unscathed. We heaved sighs of relief.

The wounded were asking for water, which was given freely—but with some anxiety because when our bottles were empty there would be no more purified water, and no means of purifying it other than boiling it: and the enemy gave no indication of allowing us the time to sit down and boil water.

An hour later we cleared the crest of a hill and, as the first truck reached the bottom of the slope, the yammering of a machinegun broke the silence. It came from ahead, round a slight bend.

Quickly the infantrymen opened up with their mortars onto the roadblock which lay ahead. The mortar bombs—clearly discernible in the hot air—flew up in a graceful arc like so many cricket balls. For a few seconds the yammering stopped and those of us who were closest to it seized axes from trucks and ran, crouching low, up to the fallen trees which formed the barrier across the road. While some chopped the tree trunks, others chopped the Japanese who lay behind them: others still lashed out at the machinegun crew, now once again firing. Beside me a youngster toppled backwards, his chest torn with bullets, into the arms of his friend. The older man held the youngster until he died a few seconds later and then went rushing in again with his axe flailing. His name was Arthur Farmer, and he was to live far longer than most.

In a matter of minutes it was over. We tossed the chopped-up sections of tree trunks aside and the road was once more clear. With some curiosity we surveyed the dead Japanese. Not a pair of spectacles amongst the lot. Every one a magnificent specimen of well-developed bone and muscle. Their equipment sensible, adequate and light. Well, we knew at last! They could see—they could fight—and they were behind us for miles.

NIGHT FELL ABRUPTLY, as nights do in tropical countries, and still the retreat to some place where there would be food and supplies continued. By now there was very little water left and the only canned food was unsweetened condensed milk. The wounded were in an appalling state. On our flanks, barely visible, we could hear the infantry pushing on firmly. For two hours the trucks ground on in low gear at walking pace, whilst we peered with aching eyes into the

darkness, only too aware that here lay excellent country for an attack. Steadily the hills around us flattened out. We were getting near the Parit-Sulong Causeway.

There was something peculiarly ominous about the thought of that long straight stretch of slightly raised road called the Causeway. It was flanked on either side by *padi* fields, so that, once on it, our convoy was irretrievably committed to fighting its way right across.

And then, as the front truck swung into the flat country of the Causeway, there came a faint shout from the invisible infantrymen just ahead. "Road blown and flooded." The Causeway—either bombed or mined by the enemy—had become inundated by the water from the *padi* fields on either side and, under a complete blackout, impossible to find. Instead of a roadway ahead, there lay only muddy water. Fifty trucks ground to a halt.

Standing on the tailboard of our truck, we leaned over the canopy, and, shoving a round up the spout, laid our rifles flat on the canvas and clicked off the safety catches. All down the line of trucks, the carefully muffled metallic snap of rifles being cocked and the click of safety catches coming off broke the strained silence that hung over the approach to the Causeway.

Far down the line of trucks a dying man groaned. Fireflies glowed momentarily in the black void around us. Some crickets with a warped sense of humour chirped cheerfully.

The whole convoy crouched still and waited in the darkness. Then an elbow nudged me and an arm pointed. I followed the line of the arm. Ahead a red glow—a mere pinpoint too still to be a firefly—shone in the dark. Beyond it another. Beyond that a third.

"Japs signalling," I thought and raised my rifle to take aim at the nearest red glow—which at once went out. All the occupants of the leading trucks were doing the same. When next those little lights came on quite a few of the sons of Nippon were going to join their forefathers.

A figure hove alongside our truck and whispered urgently, "See those lights?" I said, "Yes." "Drive between 'em," the figure ordered. "It's our blokes on each side of the roadway drawing on fags. It'll be rough as guts but it's the best we can do,"—and with that he scuttled off to the next vehicle.

Having extricated us from Muar and fought all the way from Barkri to Parit Sulong, our infantry friends were not to be frustrated now by a few flooded breaches in a causeway. They had waded out, found the edges of the road by feeling for them with their feet, and

now stood on either side stolidly drawing on cigarettes held in their cupped palms

The leading truck needed no encouragement. There was a splash; for a moment it seemed to flounder, and then it could be heard wading steadily through the water. Another followed, and a third. And the next instant we, too, were slopping our way down that dimly indicated lane, always led on by the friendly warmth of a fag that glowed for one quick draw in a closely cupped hand.

For several miles this miracle of spontaneous organization was maintained. Somehow the path ahead—apparently just a featureless expanse of water—was always indicated by those infantrymen with their cigarettes. Hour after hour went by. splashing, floundering. And just before dawn the first truck plodded up out of the *padi* water and onto the dry road that turned right and led straight into Parit Sulong village. We had escaped. After ten days and nights of ceaseless fighting, and after sixty miles of weary slogging, we were out. Though few words were spoken (and those only in whispers), every face was filled with elation.

I leaned under the truck's canopy to tell our wounded passengers the good news. "How are you doing?" I asked.

"Fine" ... "Couldn't be better" ... came the answers. Men black with dried blood, their faces and lips looking like bits of boiled liver. I felt sick.

"Have you in hospital soon," I said, and hurriedly pulled my head out again.

About a mile down the straight road that ran into Parit Sulong village, there was an arched bridge. Two minutes after leaving the Causeway the leading truck roared back. It was badly shot-up. The bridge, it reported, was strongly held by the Japanese.

SO WE HADN'T ESCAPED at all. After three or four furious bayonet charges against the bridge, it also became clear that we were not going to. This, then, was a death warrant for all our wounded. It was decided that the only thing to do was to send the worst cases in trucks up to the bridge under a flag of truce and ask the Japanese commander's permission to drive through his lines back to our own main force.

The commander examined the passengers of each truck—making sure that they were all men who urgently required treatment. Then he gave his answer. Certainly they could pass through his lines—if the entire remainder of our force surrendered! Since the Japanese

notoriously took no prisoners, this was not an altogether attractive proposition. The wounded men themselves answered it. "We'll go back to the rest and let them fight it out," they said. But neither is the Japanese one to allow valuable bargaining weapons out of his hands. "No," said the commander, "you will stay *here* while they fight,"—and with that the battle was on again. Now we knew why our vehicles hadn't been bombed the previous day. The Japanese had hoped to capture them intact for himself.

By this time all these vehicles were out of the *padé* and standing nose to tail in that straight mile of road that led to the bridge. Of our original Australian force of one thousand five hundred at Muar, some five hundred were left. Every man who could crawl and carry a rifle crept out of the trucks and into the rubber trees which flanked the road on each side. There they formed a deep, single-rank, hollow square round the core of vehicles and their cargo of wounded men.

Whilst we scraped shallow holes with our bayonets in the glutinous black soil of the rubber plantation, the enemy troops pressed in. Fire from mortars was constant. Snipers up trees made any position but the horizontal most uncomfortable. A splatter of ricochets off the road whined into the rubber whenever the dive-bombers appeared.

In the centre of the square some signallers established contact with our own forces on the only field radio which still worked, getting through our urgent request for small-arms ammunition and drugs. Night fell with everyone cheerfully determined to hold on—if necessary—for ever.

With the arrival of darkness, however, our anxieties increased. Early bayonet charges by the enemy having failed, they began systematically to mortar the long line of trucks as well as our own positions. The ammunition limber of our only working twenty-five pounder was hit and burst into a most spectacular blaze. Fire poured in at us from all sides, so that the small scraped-up mounds of earth and the rubber trees behind which we lay, spurted dirt and latex all over us.

I lay between Hugh and Johnny. A few feet away one of the ex-accountants, Piddington, was attempting to contract his six feet two inches into a depression no more than four feet in length. He wasn't very successful, but it was giving him something to do and he always liked being kept occupied.

Another bayonet attack was repelled. After it we decided to take it in shifts to sleep while the enemy paused for thought. We had been asleep for perhaps ten seconds—it couldn't possibly have been

more—when we were pummelled into a terrified wakefulness again. A strange noise which grew into the fast-approaching clatter of heavy machinery. Tanks! And then abruptly, into the now-fading circle of light cast by the burning limber, the first brute nosed its way. Behind it one perceived, vaguely, another; behind that others still.

Not a man moved a muscle. Not a sound broke the silence that fell now as the tank halted and an insolently fearless head appeared from its turret to try to draw our fire and so fix where our line lay. No one rose to the bait of that head; no one fired; no flash told the tank crew where we hid. The tank stood some forty feet away from us down the road, and searched, and waited. So did we. Who would break first?

Darkness and electric silence.

An officer's voice whispering behind me suddenly removed my gaze from the fateful tank. "Braddon," it said, "go with Moore, take hand grenades and get that tank out of the way."

Seldom had I heard a sillier suggestion. Perspiring with terror, Hugh and I accepted three hand grenades each and began to shorten the forty feet between us and the tank by wriggling forward on our quivering bellies.

Hugh was ahead of me. We were both getting close enough to the menacing machine to have to give some serious thought to the means whereby we were to deposit six hand grenades down the hatch—and then, most important of all, depart with sufficient speed to avoid annihilation.

That was the moment when, from our rear, a lone gunner chose to shout out: "Clear line; down in front." Utterly amazed, Hugh and I looked round. There, not more than twenty yards away, working at the only surviving gun, silhouetted by the glare of the lurid fire, was a solitary figure. With great deliberation, he took true aim.

Then he fired. The blast from the gun joined the blast from the tank as the shell hit it. The tank burst into flames. Without further ado, Hugh and I legged it back to our line.

A second shell shattered the next tank down the road (now well lighted up by the flames coming from its predecessor). Those tanks which lay farther down waited no longer, but turned and fled. Very sensible of them. The solitary gunner had now been joined by most of the crew, and they were raring for action.

For the moment, then, we were safe again. There was no doubt in any of our minds that if it hadn't been for that one coldly calculated

shot the enemy tanks would eventually have run us to earth and obliterated us all.

Hugh and I then decided to take it in turns to watch, and Hugh went to sleep. I was to wake him in an hour. My hour's watch was not peaceful. Three trucks were set alight by mortar fire and the wounded men in them incinerated before anyone could lift them out. A few yards to the right the Japanese attacked heavily and were repulsed. Ahead their officers shouted an order which was then relayed right round their positions so that, as one followed the sound of the voices, one realized just how securely we were encompassed. And the harsh bellows had barely died down when a vague figure flitted towards us, from tree to tree. When it was only three rubber trees away I realized uneasily that it was a Japanese soldier. Terrified because of my inefficiency with the bayonet (not to mention a natural tendency to terror anyway), I shook Hugh. But I might as well have shaken the tree behind me—one does not awaken, after four days and nights without sleep, at the mere shake of a hand. So, in desperation, I moved alone to the tree in front of me and, as the Jap ran crouching towards it, stepped out from behind it and presented him with a firmly held rifle and bayonet. Upon this he promptly impaled himself.

Daylight came. The burned-out tanks squatted grotesquely on the roadside ahead. And even as I surveyed them, Johnny Iceton let out a howl of dismay as a sniper whanged a bullet onto the righthand side of his tin hat. Ten minutes later the same sniper whanged another bullet onto the lefthand side of his tin hat and, to emphasize the point, shot the woodwork off the barrel of my rifle, which I found extremely unnerving. Half an hour later two mortar bombs warbled their way evilly over towards our group. One killed an infantryman on my right; the second landed, with great violence but without exploding, between Johnny's legs.

A last message came through on our dying radio. Australia, it said, was proud of us—which was nice.

I crawled back to our truck determined to salvage a map out of it. The lanky Piddington had a compass. With a map we could make our way through to Mersing on the east coast if our perimeter was broken and we were driven into the jungle.

All nine men in the truck were dead and the map roll was badly perforated by bullets that had come down at a steep angle—machinegunning from the air. I found the right map and also, inside the roll, two tins of condensed milk. I crept back to the line of men I

now knew so well. We opened one tin of milk with a bayonet and passed it along, from outstretched hand to outstretched hand, as each lay flat behind his little mound of earth, one mouthful a man. It was very refreshing—our first meal since the previous midday. On that occasion we had had the same thing. It looked like becoming our staple diet.

In response to our last urgently radioed request for drugs and small arms and aerial support, the air force proved its heroism by lumbering up the road at treetop level in what must have been the oldest biplane in the world still capable of becoming airborne. Unfortunately (probably owing to the faulty functioning of our radio), the small arms and drugs were dropped among the Japanese, whilst to provide aerial support, one very large bomb was deposited into the middle of our own perimeter. It fell on a group of men at the edge of the road. When the smoke cleared and the rubber leaves stopped showering off blasted trees, we gunners left the protection of the line and doubled back to where the bomb had fallen. Three rubber trees lay uprooted; a huge crater gaped like a burst boil, and of the group of men who had stood there, all that could be discovered was one boot, one shoulder blade and one tin hat.

Hugh and I returned to the line. Mortars fired on us with increasing fury as the day wore on. Beards were noticeably longer, faces noticeably leaner and eyes more sunken. Every man's back and legs were splattered with black spots of congealed latex which had spurted from the bullet-torn rubber trees under which we lay.

With the arrival of midday, it became obvious that very few men had more than a handful of ammunition left and that we could not hope to survive another night.

A military decision was made. To fight on meant annihilation for all. We were, therefore, to endeavour to escape from Parit Sulong: the badly wounded would, after our departure, officially surrender. We were ordered to take all that we could in the way of equipment and our less seriously wounded companions: to leave the line one at a time, alternate men moving; to find our own way out through the Japanese lines and thence proceed independently to *any* British position *anywhere*.

With men leaving at about ten-second intervals, bearing rifles, hand grenades and companions as they went, the line rapidly thinned. Most men headed towards the thickly-timbered right flank and vanished into it. After an hour the entire perimeter was manned only by a small handful of soldiers, two machineguns and one tommy

gun—and still the Japanese failed to realize that their prize was slipping through their fingers. Hugh and I, together with the lanky Piddington and the man on the nearest machinegun, decided to leave together. We would head for Yong Peng—fifty miles away in a straight line. Carrying an infantryman with a wounded thigh, two rifles each and the machinegun—with shirts which bulged with hand grenades—we ran, in short bursts and crouched low, to the right flank. We took a last horrified glance back at the area that had been our battle ground and at the clumps of wounded lying huddled round trees, smoking calmly. Then we crawled into the heavily-wooded fringe of the plantation and left the fight behind. We wriggled half a mile on our stomachs under dense vines and low foliage (dragging the rifles, the machinegun and the infantryman behind us), and at last—after an hour's fearful progress—considered ourselves outside the Japanese circle. As Hugh cleared a small patch of ground under the vine below which we crouched, I started unrolling the map.

It appeared that between Parit Sulong, where we crouched in the undergrowth, and Yong Peng, where we hoped to find a British force, lay a fairly high mountain, an extensive swamp and a great deal of jungle. It was about fifty miles.

By midnight, having kept at it solidly, we had covered about ten miles. By that time we had met many stragglers and odd groups of men all heading steadily eastwards; and they, taking advantage of our map and compass, had joined us. We were then about forty strong.

We lay down to sleep when rain made it impossible either to take a bearing or to read the compass. Three hours later we woke and started off again in an agony of cramped muscles. So painful was this period that most men refused to rest again and remained standing whenever a halt was called to consult the map or the compass.

An officer suggested blandly that the map would be of more value in his hands. Though we did not for one second believe it, we handed the map over—having first made a copy of all the data we needed in Piddington's notebook.

"I'll lead," announced the officer.

We reached the mountain. At its summit a track appeared. We followed it until, over the crest, it forked.

"Right," said the officer.

"Left," said Piddington, as we checked the compass. We went left.

We entered the swamp. It was impossible there to carry both weapons and our wounded, so the weapons were dumped in the

brown water. Leeches batted onto limbs, swelled large and black and then dropped off with a plump plop into the swamp—leaving a steady flow of blood where they had bitten. Walking one moment on floating logs, the next in water up to the waist, we covered another five or six miles.

As we emerged, enemy planes appeared low overhead, angrily searching for the prey they had allowed to escape at Parit Sulong. When they roared across our path, every man sank beneath the sluggish brown water and stayed there till he had either to surface or make his submersion permanent. We were not seen. The hookworms, one could not help feeling, were having a field day.

We passed out of the swamp into more jungle. Another three hours of most unpleasant travelling. The jungle thinned, and our party, now about one hundred and forty strong, as men seeped into it from all sides, halted to discuss the next move. A hundred of the infantry decided against carrying on to Yong Peng—which they maintained would already have fallen to the Japanese—and announced their intention of resting for twelve hours, then detouring north of Yong Peng and heading for the east coast. The rest of us carried on.

The jungle vanished and, worse still, the swamps reappeared. At this the officer with the map announced a halt. Hugh, Piddington, the machinegunner and myself, however, carried straight on. We were not stopping till we got to Yong Peng. In a few moments, having been joined by two others (one a gunner officer), the remainder of the party were lost to sight behind us and we were up to our necks in water.

A few minutes after leaving the remainder of the party behind us, we noticed sampans hidden in the mangroves. Heading towards them we found them to be occupied by Malays, who gazed at us very curiously indeed. We were in no mood to be gazed at curiously. We had walked thirty miles in thirty hours: we had not eaten anything for three days and very little for seven days: fate, we felt, had not been kind to us. We clambered aboard.

"Hullo, Joe," I said, "*ada Japoon?*" Joe wagged his head uninterestedly from side to side. There were no Japanese about, it appeared. I told Joe what we wanted. "*Pigi Yong Peng,*" I said, and when he looked a little mutinous I took a hand grenade from the front of my shirt, and Hugh examined his rifle, and the boatman at once ceased looking mutinous.

We collected two other sampans and sent them back to the head of the swamp to collect the remainder of the party. Then we made our

way steadily and silently down narrow oily waterways, under leprous mangrove boughs and jungle vines, until eventually we emerged from these slimy tunnels into a broad river.

There the planes searched again. But we hugged the high eroded bank and, with clumps of lalang grass attached picturesquely to our tin hats, our clothing and our boatman, endeavoured to look as much like a bit of Malaya as possible. We were scared frequently, but we were not bombed.

By dusk—the fiery red sort of dusk one would expect on the conclusion of a nasty episode in a nasty war—we had all lulled our appetites with river water and our tired bodies grew relaxed with the peaceful motion of a sampan which is paddled by someone else. We eventually drew into a canal off the river and the boatman pointed left “Yong Peng,” he announced. We clambered out and started walking.

A mile later we met a British officer “Yong Peng?” he said, in reply to our questions. “About six miles. It’ll be held for a couple of days. How many of you coming?” So our gunner officer told him, and was then struck by a thought. “Someone should go back for that infantry party,” he said.

I looked at him with complete lack of enthusiasm. I belonged to the school of “If you get a bright idea, do it yourself.” He returned my look unmoved. He gave no indication of doing anything himself, but instead stared at Hugh. There was an unpleasant silence. I also belonged to the school of “If there’s an unpleasant silence, for God’s sake say something, even if it’s silly.” So did Hugh. We said something very silly indeed. “We’ll go,” we said, and next instant—the officer having promised us guides who would be left to await our return at that position where we then stood—Hugh and I were heading back down the track again. Heading west, into the angry sunset, away from Yong Peng.

THE BOATMAN WAS RELUCTANT to return up the river. I produced my hand grenade again. We started up the river, reached the head of the swamp, and passed again through the dank tunnels of mangrove. Then, after crawling through the mud, we marched for some hours up the same track we had so recently descended, until halted by a voice which challenged us out of the gloom. We gave our names.

“Never heard of you,” the voice answered disagreeably. We hurriedly quoted the name of every footslogger we had ever known in an attempt to endear ourselves to this unseen sentry.

Finally, he said: "All right, come on." So we went forward again.

We asked for the officer in charge. We told our story. We told him the report that Yong Peng would be held for another two days. We told him the way there.

He called us bloody fools to come back; pointed out that his party had made it clear that their decision had been final *not* to go to Yong Peng, and reaffirmed that decision. So we left.

We staggered back to the swamp. Hugh was now completely exhausted. He needed sleep and food—but most of all sleep—and he needed them at once. I felt heartless as I kept dragging him along, refusing to allow him to lie down. I felt that only a terrific effort could get us to Yong Peng before the Japanese. We pressed on.

We got back to the sampans—and set sail at once, down through the evil tunnels, out into the moonlit river, down to the canal. I woke Hugh and we started walking. Twice he fell to the ground sound asleep and each time I woke him, dragging him up. "We've got to get to those guides," I told him, "before it's too late."

The third time he fell I couldn't wake him. No amount of shaking stirred him. We still had about half a mile to go. I lost my head and my temper and kicked him. He groaned and stood up. With his arm round my neck we staggered up the path. "Sorry, Hugh," I said.

"Doesn't matter, Russ," he replied. "How much further?"

"Not far," I said, "you'll be all right."

Thus we reached our departure point. There were no guides there—no one. Only mosquitoes and the croaking of frogs. We sagged to the ground without a word. As he was drowsing off, Hugh, in tones of utter indifference, asked what would happen if the Nipponese came.

"Maybe they'll think we're dead," I said, hopefully. . . .

We were awakened, it seemed, almost immediately. A glare fell into my eyes and I was very frightened indeed because it came from a powerful torch held inches from my face, while I lay helpless on my back.

And then a surprised voice said, "It's Braddon and Moore," and the moment of terror passed. There were seven of them—one officer, one gunner, one sergeant, two signalmen and two infantrymen, all Australians—and we joined them, now sufficiently rested to attempt the last six miles to Yong Peng, using the torch to find the faint track. By now I had remembered that my four grenades still lay where we had slept. No one else in our small band had any arms.

We reached the road which led down into the town at dawn.

What we saw was not pretty. Many dead in the foreground and at the bottom of the hill, a shattered bridge and thousands of milling men. "Japs!" announced one of our party.

From the bottom of the hill the Japanese shouted at us rudely. We did not stop to argue but quickly crossed the road and ran into the rubber. There was not much time to make plans.

"Where to now?" demanded one of the infantrymen in our party

"Singapore," three of us answered simultaneously.

"How far's that?" demanded the same infantryman.

"About one hundred miles," said the officer, with which we started off on the second leg of our trip from Parit Sulong.

We came to an abandoned native hut. I broke in and found a tin of condensed milk crawling with ants and half-empty. We scooped out a fingertip full of milk and ants each.

Two hours later we walked straight into an ambush. Instantly the air was full of bullets, whilst ahead of us and to our right about fifty yards away, with automatic weapons blazing, were Japanese soldiers.

I didn't wait to see what happened. I was off at once, sprinting wildly, towards the jungle on the left. Beside me, I was aware without seeing him, ran Hugh.

"Stop there," I heard the officer's clear voice directed at us. "Stop and surrender or we'll all be shot,"—and my absurd army training made me falter for a second and look back. As in any race, when one faltered, it was then too late. The path to the jungle was cut by a Japanese soldier with a tommy gun. We stood still, our only chance lost. Then, very slowly, very foolishly and with a sense of utter unreality, I put up my hands.

At that moment all that occurred to me was that this procedure was completely disgraceful. I have not—since then—changed my mind. I have no doubt at all that I should have continued running. One does not win battles by standing still and extending the arms upwards in the hope that one's foes have read the Geneva Convention concerning the treatment of prisoners of war.

The enemy patrol closed in on us. Black-whiskered men, with smutty eyes and the squat pudding faces of bullies. They snatched off our watches and made dirty gestures at the photographs of women-folk they took from our wallets. They threw the money in the wallets away, saying, "Dammé, dammé, Englishu dollars": and, pointing at the King's head on the notes, they commented: "Georgey Six Number Ten. Tojo Number One!"

They tied us up with wire, lashing it round our wrists, which were crossed behind our backs. Then they prodded us onto the edge of a drain in the rubber. We sat with our legs in it, while they set their machineguns up facing us and about ten yards away.

"We must die bravely," said the officer desperately, as we sat, the nine of us, side by side, on the edge of our ready-dug grave.

The Japanese machinegunner lay down and peered along his barrel. It was my twenty-first birthday and I was not happy.

AT THE FIRST LONG VOLLEY of shots I jerked rigid, experiencing no emotion other than a faint surprise that I was still alive. Then I looked up and realized that the machinegun was firing not at us in the trench but up the slight rise at a solitary figure who dashed across the skyline. Japanese soldiers were fanning quickly out through the rubber and in a few moments he was dragged down the hill to where we sat. He was an officer of our regiment, fair-haired, tall and lean. They tied him up. He wore that most useless of all weapons, a .45 revolver. His captors quickly took it from him.

The Japanese, of whom there were about fifteen, now held a conference. They were squat figures with coarse puttees, canvas, rubber-soled boots, smooth brown hands, heavy black eyebrows, and ugly battle helmets. Each man wore two belts—one to keep his trousers up and one to hold his grenades, his identity disc and his religious charm—and when they removed their helmets, they wore caps, and when they took off their caps, their hair had been shaved to a harsh black stubble. They handled their weapons as if they had been born with them. They were the complete fighting animal.

Their leader surveyed us morosely and idly waved the revolver he had taken from our latest recruit. He spoke a little English.

"You," he said, pointing to a signaller, "age-u?" The sig looked blank, so I told him that the little ape wanted to know how old he was.

"Twenty," he said.

"Twenty-ka?" queried the leader and looked most surprised.

"You?" he said, pointing to Hugh.

"Twenty," said Hugh.

"You?" he demanded of me.

"Twenty-one," I told him. He muttered to himself, then turned to his men and informed them, with a contemptuous gesture at us, "*Niju*." They all registered astonishment.

"Baby," he said. "Twenty no good. Nippon soldier twenty-four. Nippon soldier Number One, English soldier Number Ten."

"Balls," replied Hugh, whereupon the Japanese soldier—who did not understand the word but could not mistake the inflection—hit him with the butt of the revolver.

Our execution, apparently, was for the moment forgotten. Taking a long swig at his round waterbottle, the leader suddenly declared: "All men come," and put his cap and helmet back onto his bristly skull. So we were prodded upright with bayonets and then set out on what was to be a long and rather unpleasant march.

We marched briskly all day—a day of harsh heat during which we were allowed no water and no rest. At about four in the afternoon our captors sat down under a banana tree to eat. We were kept standing in the sun on a hard-baked track which ran through the small clearing. We were not guarded with much attention. However, our feet as well as our hands were now shackled. I seized the opportunity, whilst the Japanese were preoccupied with refreshments, to pull my wrists free and untie my ankles. Then, when the ancient Malay who had brought the Japanese their cooked food reappeared, I walked down the track to meet him and, giving him my empty waterbottle, demanded that he fill it. He refused. Water by this time, though, had become essential. I was sufficiently light-headed to make murderous advances at the old man.

"*Ayer*," I snapped at him. "*Ayer! Ayer Lacas!*" "Water ... and quickly." As I raised my voice, the Japanese raised their eyes from their mess tins and watched intently.

"They're on to you, Russ," Hugh warned, "better skip it!" The sergeant among us, a no-hoper who had done nothing but bellyache ever since Hugh and I had joined up with him and the others, now shouted, "Come back here, you silly bastard. You're drawing the crabs for the rest of us. Come back here." But water was now my main interest in life. "*Ayer*, Joe," I demanded again. "*Ayer*," and thrust the waterbottle at him. He reached out, took the bottle and returned a few moments later with it filled.

I walked back to the rest and went from man to man holding the bottle to his mouth—a procedure necessary because their hands were still lashed behind their backs—until all the water was gone.

The whole operation was watched, in venomous silence, by the Japanese. Now that it was completed and I had nothing to do, I felt terror-stricken by the fact that I was so obviously unshackled. I could feel my right eyelid twitching and I had a frantic desire to drop my eyes from the long gaze of the leading Japanese. On the other hand, I felt certain that if I did, my number would be up. So apparently did

Hugh. "Stick to him, Russ," he muttered. Desperately I stuck—and after another interminable ten seconds the little Japanese turned away, apparently, of a sudden, quite uninterested.

For twenty minutes the Japanese murmured quietly among themselves. Then they rose and unshackled their prisoners' ankles. One of them dispassionately tied my wrists behind my back again, looped the rope around my throat and back down to my wrists. Then he ordered the sergeant over and joined the loose end of my rope to the knot which secured his wrists. Then he dragged the two of us to Hugh and tied Hugh in the same way to the other side of the sergeant. The other seven men were tied up in a three and a four. We were on the march again.

After a few miles the sergeant found progress easier if, every now and then, he took both his feet off terra firma and we carried him. I began to hate him as I had never hated in my life before. Not only was he heavy to carry, but the sudden jolt of his weight on the thin rope when he lifted his feet, cut our wrists and sawed at our throats. Hugh was pale with pain.

"Drop the bastard," advised one of the infantrymen behind us. We warned him, Hugh and I, that if he persisted, we would free ourselves and wring his bloody neck. He laughed, a little madly, and said we would never ditch a fellow Australian—and then swung more lustily than ever. Hugh warned him again. Then, when next he lifted both feet off the ground, I tore my wrist free. The loose rope snaked round my throat and the sergeant thudded to the ground.

The march stopped abruptly. As the Japanese crowded round the sergeant, who lay kicking childishly on the track, I stepped over to Hugh and separated his bonds from those of the fallen man. Hugh straightened up.

The sergeant refused to get up, so the Japanese leader asked would Hugh and I carry him. I made the first adult decision in my life. I said, "No."

The Japanese unholstered the revolver he had taken from our second officer. He glanced at me again, inquiringly. I moved my head negatively. Holding the pistol within a foot of the sergeant's stomach, he fired five times.

Hugh was suddenly very white. "He's dead," he said. The others said nothing. "Good," I told him. As the ropes were tied round my wrists again, I reflected grimly that for once in the presence of death I did not feel sick. I supposed that I was growing up.

I was quiet for some time thereafter. I had changed, I knew. I

remembered that before becoming involved in a war, I had been pleasant and agreeable enough. Since then, however, I had rather abruptly been required to kill other men to avoid being killed myself; to decide whether or not, regardless of their rank, men's orders were worth obeying; and now I had seen a fellow Australian murdered on my own verdict. I acknowledged, not for the first time, that the old Braddon was the nicer one. I nevertheless faced up finally to the fact that what I had become was, if I was to survive, what I would stay.

WE MARCHED THE REST OF THAT DAY and much of the night in grim silence. Marched with a speed and sureness that was almost incredible when one realized that the Japanese who guarded us had been in Malaya only six weeks. It was explained only when one saw the map by which they marched—a map which ignored all main routes and gave only creeks, *padi* tracks, jungle pads, native huts. Every minute detail was there. Where our British maps would have marked nothing but jungle and a few contour lines, these Japanese marched according to a plan that looked like a route through London. Every yard of their progress had been charted by twenty years or so of Japanese tailors, photographers, launderers, planters, miners and brothel keepers in the period before the war. Now those years of work bore fruit.

At midnight we halted and the patrol slept—leaving us always heavily guarded. It was unnecessary. We slept, too. Nothing could have kept us awake—not even being trussed together, all nine of us, into an immovable and inflexible lump of humanity. At dawn we were off again. The Japanese had washed, eaten and drunk—but we received nothing.

At midday we passed a large formation of bicycle troops on a road. They carried small mortars, civilian clothes, mortar ammunition and rifles. We were severely manhandled and each of us was punched and kicked. Hugh's arms gaped open where he had warded off a sword blow. In addition, some of us had our boots taken from us and marched, thenceforward, barefoot. The jungle is not kind to those who walk in bare feet.

We marched till midnight, when we came to another road. There the nine of us were incarcerated in a chicken coop. On either side of the road were vast numbers of enemy troops. Our chicken coop adjoined a small copra-drying shed of galvanized iron. A few hours after we wakened, all hell broke loose outside and we realized that a battle was raging on the road. Bullets tore through the chicken coop.

The battle died down. Thirty prisoners—the only survivors of an entire British convoy, and most of them wounded—had been taken. We were joined with them and flung into the small red iron copra shed, which was about ten feet square. There we stayed for two days.

During those two days the more serious wounds went gangrenous and the packed shed stank with the stench of living death. The man on my right had had his jaw shot away from just below his ear down to his chin. He was hideous to look at and the flesh, like greenish lace at the raw edges, stank sweetly.

“Am I very badly disfigured?” he asked anxiously. Hugh looked him full in what remained of his face and declared: “You’re as beautiful as ever.” Hugh was fair-haired and could look extraordinarily angelic at times, and he did so now, his smile reassuring. The horror leaned back content.

During those forty-eight hours we received one lot of water—about three mouthfuls each—and four coconuts. I managed also to scrape in, through a hole in the wall, a double handful of fly-blown rice off the enemy’s garbage heap. This worked out at a spoonful each. We ate some of the drying copra but, though it makes good oil, it can hardly be described as appetizing. Dysentery broke out.

The new prisoners were all either English troops or Malay volunteers and were magnificent in their courage. During the night quite a few men were chosen for questioning—mainly on the use of gas, about which none of us knew anything. They were taken outside and then, in the semi-gloom, just visible through the hole in the wall, stabbed and bashed to death. They died shouting defiance. At the end of the forty-eight hours those of us who were left were herded into a truck—one of ours captured in the ambushed convoy—and driven off. The road on both sides for ten miles bore witness to the fury with which British troops had fought the enemy. No Japanese bodies remained—they were always swiftly removed—but the corpses of our own men lay everywhere, blackening and bloating in the sun.

The truck stopped suddenly. The driver had noticed an old Chinese man standing on the edge of the road. He was very old indeed and senile. The driver leaped out and with two other Japanese battered him viciously. His cries brought more Nipponese troops to the scene. They decided to make a day of it and set fire to the old man’s head. As his hair blazed and he screamed, the sort of screams that only burning men can scream, petrol was poured onto

the roasted scalp. It was quite some time after he expired that the Japanese laughter and excitement died down. Rather like an English crowd at the conclusion of a closely-fought football match

Chattering gaily, our driver got back into the truck. With a grind of gears and a jolt as the clutch was let carelessly up, we were on our way again.

Moving north, we reached a small town where the superficially wounded were given some treatment by the Japanese and the seriously wounded—including the man whose jaw had been shot away—were, we presumed (for no one ever saw them again), killed off. In the morning one of the English soldiers produced a safety razor and a blade. About thirty of us shaved with it. We were questioned, beaten up and moved further north to Batu Pahat.

At Batu Pahat we were questioned, beaten up and moved yet further north to Gemas. At Gemas we were questioned, beaten up and put into a cattle truck on a train. In all that time we had eaten only a few spoonfuls of rice. We had now been ten days with virtually no food at all and eight of us had marched about one hundred and eighty miles in that time. It had become physically impossible any longer to attempt escape.

The train stopped thirty-six hours later at a bomb-wrecked station which was Kuala Lumpur. We were marched from the station through the city; and the march was made unforgettable by the stoning and spitting meted out by a native population which had only a few weeks before been hysterically pro-British.

A mile from the station, high dun-coloured walls looked down at us. We turned a corner and marched beside them. Huge doors opened and we passed through them. The doors closed. We were prodded into a small courtyard and the gate to that, too, was closed. Inside the courtyard, which had been designed to provide exercise for thirty female convicts, we found seven hundred men. In it, and the cells for those thirty female convicts, we seven hundred were now to live, sleep, cook, excrete, wash and die.

WHICH IS HOW I CAME to be on the fourteenth of the twenty-two steps that led up from the courtyard to the women's cells in Pudu Gaol, with an Argyll at my feet who was dead. Tears came to my eyes, almost equally for the Argyll and for myself.

A figure loomed up at the stairhead behind me. "What's the matter with you?" it demanded in a broad Scots accent.

"Tired," I replied.

"And what's the matter with him?" demanded the Scot, pointing at the Argyll.

"Dead," I replied. The Scot moved quickly down past me and touched the Argyll's face.

"Aye," he agreed softly, "he's dead." He thought for a moment and then asked: "Can you help me carry him up the stairs?" I suggested that first we clean the youngster up. So we carried him down to where there was a tap at the bottom of the stairs, undressed him and washed him—watched throughout in stolid silence by the sentry, who sat with his knees wide apart and his rifle across them. Then we carried the Argyll to the head of the stairs, where we laid him down.

After hesitating in awkward silence for a few moments, the Scot muttered: "Goodnight, Aussie," and I muttered: "Goodnight, Jock," and we went to our respective places on the floor and lay down—whilst all around, close packed, hundreds of men slept the restless sleep of captivity.

Chapter Four

Pudu Gaol was a place of fascinating stories. Every man in it had been captured in extraordinary circumstances miles behind the Japanese lines. Some had been betrayed by the native population in return for a reward from the Japanese; some, having succumbed to exhaustion, had woken to find themselves surrounded by curious Nipponese soldiers; some had given themselves up rather than allow the enemy to take reprisals (because their presence in the area was known) upon the local population. A few, like myself, had been dazed by the swiftness of events and, unable to act decisively to avoid capture, had been forced to surrender.

Our quarters were the women's cells on the first floor. On the ground floor beneath us were the peacetime administrative offices, now occupied by the Japanese guards. There was also one small room in which dwelt two British brigadiers who seemed to hate all men of rank lower than brigadier and who asserted their now non-existent authority by demanding larger rations than anyone else. It became customary to regard them as mad and to ignore them.

A second ground-floor office was the gaol's hospital. It was, perhaps, ten feet by eight feet, with a tiny alcove off it about six feet by six feet. Into this "hospital" we carried those of our dysentery

cases who were so ill as to be helpless. They lay on the floor side by side in filth and squalor and usually died quickly.

The block in which all these cells, offices, makeshift hospitals and evil-tempered senior officers were housed constituted the base of a triangle. The other two sides of the triangle were wholly devoted to unused cells. They were separated from the base by grass round which ran a path. Such was the architecture of our new life.

The transition to gaol life was violent. As each man entered the gaol he was stripped of everything which could possibly be used as a weapon. This included, as well as the obvious items, all nail files, knives, razors and blades. We had no eating utensils—no plates, knives, forks or spoons. We ate out of the lids of gaol bedpans, old hubcaps, battered kidney dishes. We ate with our fingers and bits of wood. And what we ate was rice, with no salt or flavouring or vegetable matter of any kind, and overcooked. We consumed a couple of pints of this glue a day.

Also, there was the emotional adjustment which had to be made in men who only yesterday had been fighting the enemy and were now at his mercy—this the more so since he had hastened to assure us that we were not deemed official prisoners of war but only slave labour. This lent a certain doubtful quality to the average man's expectation of life and resulted eventually—in most cases—in a rather delightful air of detachment. The philosophy of "It doesn't matter" had its birth in those days.

Beards grew, stubble first, then scruffy fur. We had no soap, no towels, no clothes other than those we wore—usually only shorts. During the day we dug in shifts to try to keep latrines available. Then we huddled in the sun against the hot wall, as far from the latrines as possible in that tiny space, and told our respective tales.

It was agreed that when one volunteered for Empire service, one volunteered for whatever came—not for a war of complete safety fought under an umbrella of Spitfires. This conclusion having been reached, we accepted our lot philosophically. The odds had been difficult. That was one of the things we had volunteered for—if it were necessary. There was no more to be said.

Singapore had not yet fallen. We did not think it would fall. We thought that our forces would withdraw to the island and there fight a war of bitter attrition until aerial support and armour eventually arrived. We did not know that the big fifteen-inch guns on Singapore could not fire north, whence the attack came. We did not know that the architects of Singapore, the impregnable fortress, had omitted to

provide an adequate water supply on the island itself—most of its water coming from Johore *across* the Causeway. We knew neither of these things. And remembering the stubborn retreat of the British so far, we had no fears for Singapore's ultimate safety.

Meantime, we squatted in the courtyard; tanks rumbled endlessly down the road outside; bombers lifted off nearby Kuala Lumpur airfield and over the gaol walls; the guards surveyed us with sullen venom; and every evening it rained. We ate our two pints of glue, drank our one pint of boiled water, grew steadily weaker and more hirsute, and then—at dusk—went to bed.

Bed meant the floor of the veranda and the cells. It meant every inch of floor being covered in a sprawling mass of humanity. Wounded men; men with fever; men who dreamed and men who couldn't sleep; they lay on bare boards with no covering. And all the time, over this carpet of sprawled bodies, a constant pilgrimage picked its urgent way towards the latrine. As if nine or ten such interruptions a night were not enough, millions of lice did their best to make sleep impossible. Morning always came as a relief.

The first thing that happened each morning was the check parade. There we Australians fell in on one side of the courtyard midst much chatter and horseplay (after all, this was only a performance for the "bloody Nips"). On the other side, to the accompaniment of numerous unintelligible bellows from army warrant officers complete with waxed moustaches, the British troops formed an immaculate squad which fairly quivered to attention. The two squads stood about ten feet apart, the Australians openly amused at the antics of the British; the British frankly astounded at our disorderliness; the Japanese stamping up and down between us counting, in their customary inaccurate manner, on their fingers.

There followed the morning meal—a few dollops of the greyish glue—and after that the parade to the so-called "hospital". Admittedly, there was an MO, a young New Zealander, but he had at his disposal no drugs, no dressings, only a few pairs of forceps and an old stethoscope. He had to cure gangrenous wounds, amoebic and bacillary dysentery, incipient avitaminosis, malaria, and soon scabies. In those early days there seemed to be nothing that he could do—but one still paraded, if only for the cold comfort of hearing him say so.

I was a regular attendant on these parades. My feet had deep holes in them, mainly on the top where they had been stamped on, and these holes joined in evil-looking tunnels under the sinews and

tendons that lead to the toes. The doctor declared that these burrows must be kept clean. Since they were at the time full of black mud and rotten flesh, this proposition did not appeal to me. I lacked the moral courage, however, to say so and consequently was attacked each morning by one of the handful of medical orderlies who had come to the gaol. Brandishing one of the pairs of forceps and a swab of gaol canvas (canvas that had been used by the peacetime convicts to make mailbags), he would pursue me round the small concrete cell—much to the agitation of the dysentery patients over whom we skipped—until I was cornered. Then he would thrust his beastly instrument in and out of the tortuous tunnels in my feet. The holes gave no indication of healing; but, on the other hand, they became no deeper—and with this the doctor and the orderly seemed well pleased. Hugh enjoyed similar medical frolics with the sword wounds in his arms. Hundreds of other men went through agonies a thousand times worse in silence as their more serious wounds were dealt with.

One morning we came down to check parade and there, on the wall of the gaol, hung a large banner on which was printed in large letters and shocking English a statement to the effect that Singapore had unconditionally surrendered to the Imperial Japanese army. This we did not for one second believe. But when, two days later, all the tanks we had heard rolling down past the gaol and all the planes that had lumbered overhead, and all the soldiers who had sung their victory song as they marched through the city—when all these were heard heading past us again, but this time north towards Burma, then we knew that it was true.

This appalling fact was accepted in the usual British fashion—everyone began assessing where we would counterattack and when the eventual victory would be won.

ALMOST CONCURRENT WITH the fall of Singapore four other factors entered our lives—and these factors were to colour our entire *modus vivendi* for the next four years. They were, to employ the vernacular of those days, Bastardry about Drugs; the Imperial decree that working men only got food; Happy Feet; and Rice Balls.

Rice Balls is not an elegant term. It was not, however, an elegant complaint, and no picture of the life we led from 1942 to 1945 is complete without its inclusion. It was the most apparent symbol of our greatest need—vitamins—and, at the same time, of the common man's indomitable humour under even the most humiliating of afflictions. For Rice Balls, to us, meant not one of the favourite dishes

of the Japanese, but the making raw (by the denial of even a tiny quantity of Vitamin B₂) of a man's genitals. It was a constant factor in one's life that varied between acute discomfort and acute pain. And because the men who suffered this affliction ironically—and aptly—applied to it the name more commonly given to a food very close to the heart of every son of Nippon, it is fitting enough, however indelicate, to use it here. We ate rice only. Consequently we had Rice Balls.

Happy feet were another symptom of the same thing—lack of vitamins. This scourge struck about half the men in gaol only, but made up the balance by striking them with a pain twice as severe as anything any of us had ever experienced before. It inflicted them with a persistent series of searing stabs in the soles of their feet. The pain was like fire. Boys of twenty became suddenly, in physique and expression, old men—shrunk and desperate.

Japanese Bastardy, as we Australians called it, applied to almost everything in our lives, but most of all—because of the far-reaching effects it had—to our request for drugs. Of these they had captured vast quantities and also had vast quantities of their own. Yet the Japanese constantly refused all requests for any of them. His best answer was: "*Ashita*" "Tomorrow" which, in the Japanese mouth, meant "Never".

And, finally, with the introduction at this time of working parties, came that other Japanese refinement—food only for those who work. Needless to say, this did not mean that those men who lay ill starved, because whatever food the Japanese sent in as rations for the workers was at once distributed to all. The point was that the ration was wholly inadequate, even for the coolie standards to which we had been reduced: but when that ration had to stretch over an extra twenty per cent at least of our working population, then starvation became a real prospect.

Only one other factor remains to complete the scene in which we were for the next nine months to live. That is the imprisonment, as well as ourselves, in our gaol, of political prisoners—mainly Chinese—seized by the Japanese for alleged British sympathies or rebel activities. These unfortunate people were questioned, tortured and murdered, which was a noisy process. Eventually their heads would appear on poles in the streets.

In spite of the horror of these heads as we marched out of the gaol each day, the working parties were a glorious release. We worked for several weeks before the novelty wore off, repairing Kuala Lumpur's

demolished bridges. It was delightful, even though the work was heavy and the Japanese engineers in charge of us vicious to the point of insanity, to get out of those high walls and the all-pervading smell of latrines. It was restoring to snatch a piece of frangipani off a tree as one passed—to smell its clean scent and carry it till the white petals went brown.

One day we returned to the gaol and were told some good news—we were to move, all of us, out of the women's quarters designed for thirty, into the left wing of the two sides of the triangle. There we would live with only three men in each cell meant for one.

I moved, with Hugh Moore and Arthur Farmer, into the cell nearest the junction of all three blocks. After we had done an initial reconnaissance and killed all the bugs we could see in our cell, I walked out into the wide passage on either side of which the cells ran. Next door Roy and Rene, the two sigs with whom I had been captured, had chalked up over their door "Shangri-la"; across the way, three infantrymen had printed cheerfully: "Abandon hope all ye who enter here". Through the grille which separated our cell block from the British, I could see five Englishmen who sat on the floor and, in close harmony, assured the world that "There's No—o Place Like Home". Our life began to assume a shape and pattern.

THE MOST OUTSTANDING PERSONALITY in Pudu Gaol was a rosy-cheeked little man with a cheerful grin and a mop of hair like a small boy's who a few years before had been small enough to cox the Cambridge VIII all over Europe, and who at the Battle of Batu Pahat had been big enough, though ordered not to, to stay behind with the wounded who could not be evacuated. His name was Padre Noel Duckworth. It is a name which tens of thousands of Australians, Englishmen and Scots will remember till the day they die.

He was without any doubt the mainspring of the orderly way of life we managed to carve for ourselves in Pudu. He was fearlessly outspoken, and yet could be very kind. He was the easiest man to talk to. He organized lectures and created out of a cell a chapel to which even such heathens as I were glad to go and sit and think about home, or God, or whatever it is people do sit and contemplate when they're lonely. He founded the gaol's black market with the Japanese—selling them anything from gold fillings to fountain pens. He discovered an imaginary "well-dressed Eurasian" whilst on his numerous visits to the cemetery to bury our dead and, from him, obtained a daily news bulletin which made our hearts glow.



Heads of Malays and Chinese who were executed for "cooperating".

Having determined to give us good cheer by lying, the noble padre lied most blackly. Russian tanks swarmed through Poland towards Germany; Britain planned a huge invasion of Italy; millions of Japanese were being annihilated in Burma—all this in early 1942, at the time when the German advance on Stalingrad was about to start, India seemed about to fall and Italy was still only being vaguely referred to as the “soft underbelly” of Europe! But to men who were ill and starving and dying off at a quite alarming rate, the padre’s “well-dressed Eurasian” was exactly what was required. By the time his resounding triumphs had begun to attract scepticism, we had all become sufficiently toughened to the sordidness of our surroundings to be of good heart without the artificial boost of “Duckworth’s news”, as it was called. We even acquired a wireless set and with that received regular BBC bulletins which, though they contained no resounding triumphs—at least, not on our side—nevertheless gave us what we needed, which was contact with the outside world

The padre’s black market—though it might not in theory have secured the blessing of the Anglican Church—was conducted with considerable élan. The padre was a realist as well as a Christian—not for nothing had he worked in the slums of English cities. We needed food: the Malays would sell us food: the Japanese coveted any western trinkets such as watches and fountain pens. Though there were few of these in Pudu Gaol, the padre fully intended to sell them those few, so that the proceeds could be used to buy from the Malays.

“Nippon,” he would shout at the weakest-willed looking guard available. The gentleman addressed would leap uneasily. “Come here, you little sewer rat,” the padre would continue in honeyed tones. “Come here, you charming little lump of garbage and buy this perfectly worthless pen.”

“Ah so-ka!” the Japanese would murmur delightedly as his eye caught sight of the pen in the padre’s hand.

“Parker-ka?” the Japanese would ask. The padre would look instantly at the inscription on the side of the pen and, though the inscription very rarely said Parker, he invariably replied, “Yes, Parker, Parker Number One, eh? Now tell me, Tojo, how much of your ill-gotten pay are you going to give me for this very inferior pen?”

And in the end he would bleed the Nip white, give him the pen and send him packing with a fresh blast of insults which were

delivered with so sweet a smile that the guard would bow low and gratefully, convinced that he had both made a good deal and been flattered. Thus did all the pens, watches, grubbed-out gold fillings from teeth, signet rings, cigarette cases and other valuables—or alleged valuables—go the way of Nippon; and the money we gained in return for these possessions went the way of the Malays in return for food.

IN ANY COMMUNITY where near-starvation prevails, the first thing to get settled to the satisfaction of all is the distribution and cooking of what rations there are. To this problem the men of Pudu devoted themselves with earnest application in the time-honoured way of all Britons—they formed a committee.

As a result, the gaol cookhouse was wangled for us by protracted negotiations with the Japanese. The rice, now decently cooked, was collected in tubs from that cookhouse and carried—in sight of all—to the distribution points, where so many men fell in per tub of rice. The contents of each tub were then issued, a scoop at a time, to the men in the queues, the whole operation being supervised by an officer. The officers themselves collected their food last and only ate when they were sure that every one of the men had received his ration—a point of military etiquette which I saw in no other camp and which speaks volumes for the calibre of the officers we had with us at Kuala Lumpur.

To overcome the murderous effects of the almost-impossible tasks set us by the Japanese, teamwork was required to the *nth* degree. It cannot be too strongly stressed how, in those days, the individual had to subordinate his desires to society rules if that society were to survive. The three things that could, at any time, kill us all off were work, disease and starvation.

Only split-second timing and simultaneous effort by a squad of sick men could enable them to lift huge dredge cups onto railway trucks—and, having lifted them, to deposit them so gently that fingers and limbs were not severed. Only rigid self-discipline could keep latrines unfouled so that the maggots did not breed round them and the disease-carrying fly increase its numbers. Only a faithful adherence to the rules could ensure that the tiny quantity of food which came into the camp would keep everyone alive, and that the limited water would slake one's thirst, keep one clean and wash one's eating dishes. All those things were managed. The prisoner-of-war life of those four years was an object lesson in living together.

HUGH DEVELOPED HAPPY FEET; Arthur developed chronic wind; my ankles swelled ominously and the gaol population at large was now becoming most interesting to look at with its assorted beards which were nevertheless intensely uncomfortable. With our long hair, they overheated our skins, and were also difficult both to keep clean without soap, and to dry without towels. Moreover, one lived in terror of their being infested by the ubiquitous louse.

One did, however, derive much comfort whilst one talked at night. Night talks turned out to be one of the few charms of life. Among our numbers, as happened in every camp for all the ensuing years, were men who had done everything. There was no part of the world, no job in the world, no profession, no hobby that someone in Pudu had not himself done or seen. If one wanted information on any of the professions, the trades or the arts; on exploration, big-game hunting, ski-ing or any other sport; on professional soldiering or professional crime, one had only to search within the few hundred cells of Pudu to find someone who was an authority.

In consequence of all this, it came as no surprise to anyone that when the Japanese discovered that all the frozen meat in the Kuala Lumpur Cold Storage Company was bad and therefore graciously presented it to us, we had in our midst both butchers and health inspectors. The former cut up the few carcasses of Australian beef allotted to us each day and the latter expertly declared whether or not—though rotten—it was beyond consumption. Usually it was, whereupon the carcasses were burned, watched with fierce longing by hundreds of pairs of meat-hungry eyes. But occasionally it was not—and then the cookhouse would prepare a stew of surpassingly vile savour and we would be issued with two cubes each of greenish meat, a shred of nauseating fat and a scoopful of juice which looked like sewage. In spite of its foul taste, I consumed it unhesitatingly.

Each day a party of most of the men in the gaol who could walk went out to work—mainly bridge reconstruction, carrying sandbags in an endless chain of half-naked, barefoot misery.

Bridge work, however, was infinitely preferable to the collection and loading onto lorries and trains of the wrecked mining dredges that lay all round Kuala Lumpur. These had been blown up and destroyed as part of the scorched-earth policy of our own administration and now lay in huge unwieldy lumps of metal in every tin mine. The Japanese engineers were collecting every bit of it and shipping it off to Japan, there to be converted into armour. By generous applications of pick handle to any exposed portion of the

body, and by piratical slashings with the flat of their bayonets. our captors urged us on to lift almost superhuman weights. The days were a bedlam of their incessant screaming—until the glaring tropical sun began to set and the pink dusk would see us marching, bedraggled and blood-smeared, back to the gaol

But whatever the job and wherever it was, we still, at all times, had one means of asserting ourselves—we stole! Although it was universally accepted that in this pastime the Australians were without peers (probably, the Pommies maintained, because of our dubious background of convict settlements), the British troops were nevertheless just as diligent and frequently achieved spectacular successes. Thus, over the next few months, though it was the Australians who stole the most food, it was the Pommies who first stole drugs; though it was the Australians who smuggled in a wireless set, it was the Pommies who brought home hand grenades resting comfortably in the curly hair under their various hats.

One of the earliest successes was the party who, working near a hospital managed "to send off" (as the language of those days was for "to steal") a large number of lumps of sulphur and several packages of something labelled Mg SO_4 . Anything labelled Mg SO_4 must—the gentleman who sent it off thought—be extremely precious. He accordingly deposited one large package down his G string, gave another to his comrade, who did the same, and they were both extremely displeased, upon successfully passing all searchers and re-entering the gaol, to be told by the MO that their treasure was no more nor less than Epsom salts.

The MO, however, was delighted. He asked only that we acquire for him a grease which he could use as a base for the sulphur, whereby an ointment might be produced. Next day, accordingly, three ten-pound tins of British army mosquito repellent—which had been singularly useless as a repellent of mosquitoes—were sent off and brought home to the doctor. Thus equipped, the doctor set to work on his patients.

All internal complaints were treated with Epsom salts; all external complaints—work-party injuries, battle wounds or skin diseases—were smeared with sulphur set in a base of mosquito cream. This latter produced the most lively results, was known as Hell-Fire Ointment, and provided no cures whatsoever.

The MO attacked the problem of dysentery with decision and courage. The death rate was now so high that his violent methods seemed justifiable. He put all dysentery sufferers onto a liquid diet—

rice gruel and the juice of a few boiled sweet potato leaves which grew outside the gaol—and flushed them out violently with repeated doses of salts. It must have taken great strength of mind to deny starving men any solid food and then to shatter their weakened frames with explosive quantities of concentrated MgSO_4 . He did it, however, and quite a few who had seemed to be dying survived.

Quite a few, however, did not. The hospital was a shambles—in spite of the tireless efforts of the few orderlies. Every inch of floor space was occupied by the sick—some lying on the bare concrete: some on sacks: some on stretchers. Everywhere orderlies ran with improvised bedpans, or with pails of water, to clean up men who in their helplessness had fouled themselves. In between the patients squatted their friends, murmuring words of encouragement and brushing off the flies. And every now and then a low moan would presage that pool of black blood which meant that a man's bowels had burst and his life gone.

Day after day, Padre Duckworth held funeral services for two or three. As the shrunken little body was borne out through the prison, loosely crated in a crude coffin, everyone who was not out at work stood silently to attention. The fear that had first gripped me when I saw the young Argyll dead at my feet on the staircase used to hit hard at those moments. And on every frowning forehead of every silent man one could read the same thought—who next and how to stop it?

For myself, I determined that I would eat *everything*—thus cats, dogs, frogs, snakes, bad fish, bad meat, snails, grubs, fungus, crude vegetable oil, green leaves from almost anything that grew, roots and rubber nuts, all went the same route.

In addition I determined that I would never complain about any food we did receive because that might unnerve someone who had just steeled himself to swallow it: similarly, that I would not tolerate the company of anyone, however much I liked him, who himself complained. One could have no time for the man who pointed out to you that your rice was full of weevils—one pretended that the weevils were not there and ate them, being grateful for the calorific content they might yield.

Finally, I determined that I would seek help from my friends as seldom as possible. I would make my own decisions and abide by them. I would steal whenever and wherever possible. I would keep my mind active by reading whatever I could lay hand to, and by talking to whomever could endure me.

I started this policy of mental activity to ward off mental atrophy by reading the complete works of George Bernard Shaw—a volume I found one day whilst a party of us repaired a Japanese brothel. Later I was to acquire other books but for the moment, armed with GBS and seven hundred men to talk to and a diary in which I entered uncharitable remarks about Japanese civilization, I felt that, from the point of view of remaining articulate and sane, I was adequately equipped.

Life staggered on. Hugh's arms healed up, but his happy feet drove him to join the sleepless band who every night walked round and round the second-floor balcony which flanked the well of the three tiers of cells. Arthur's wind got worse, his figure gaunter and his blue eyes more glittering. And one day, as our work drew to its close, I turned to a fellow prisoner and said: "Thank God in another hour we'll all be back at home." So, after only a few months, those high claustrophobic walls had changed from being a prison to *home*. Life was indeed assuming a different aspect.

The next day, therefore, having arrived at the stage where I could think of a cell in a gaol as home, Hugh and I determined to make it so. We mentioned the subject to Arthur and he was enthusiastic. We set out on the day's work determined to steal fittings.

At night, when we returned, we had some promising material. Hugh had sent off an electric-light globe and a lampshade. Arthur had collected a vase, a small mat, some signal wire and four nails. I had acquired a Balinese head in wood and a stool. The stool, during the search, I had sat on and it therefore escaped the guard's attention; but the head (life-size), even though I laid it negligently on the ground and rested my foot on it as if it were a rock, the guard spotted. Much bellowing and pushing about ensued.

It was explained to me, by gestures, that my head was about to be rendered as bodiless as the Balinese one. I was forced to kneel. The guard commander took out his sword and swished it. Then, advancing left foot foremost in that fashion which the Japanese swordsman always uses, and swinging the double-handed sword downwards at each step, he moved towards me. Finally, with a hoarse "*Banzai*," he bounded the last few feet and brought his sword down with a resounding thud. The Balinese head lay beside me cleft in two.

As the Japanese laughed uproariously at this demonstration of their national humour, an Argyll put a hand under my elbow and helped me to my feet (a service for which I was grateful). We marched inside the gaol. When I sat in my cell a few moments later,

the squat, broad-shouldered figure of a coal miner from Newcastle-upon-Tyne called Shorty appeared in the doorway.

"Here's the head you brought back, Aussie," he said, holding it out. "Half of it, anyway," he amended. To bring in that half-head, after the demonstration the guard commander had given of his temper, at that moment, was a gesture which would have taken more courage than I shall ever have. All I could say, though, was: "Thanks, Shorty," whilst Arthur said: "Good on you, mate," and Hugh examined the wooden carving curiously.

"That's all right," said Shorty, rather embarrassed, and left.

We stood the half-head—the face was intact, the back of the skull had been severed—on the stool in the corner of the cell. The signal wire we made into a length of flex and ran it along the top of the wall and out through the door. There, using two of Arthur's four nails, we plugged the flex into the main gaol power line which ran along the front of the cells just above door level. Then we fitted Hugh's bulb into the lampshade which included a socket, joined the socket to the flex and, to our delight, we had light. Pale pink light. Next day Arthur brought home frangipani blooms and that night we sat on the cell slab, our feet on a mat, our beards gleaming in soft pink light, a delicately carved wooden face gazing at us from the corner, a vase of white, sweet-scented flowers on the floor. We felt most elegant. Hugh suddenly spun round from the wall against which he had been leaning and jabbed with an indignant thumb: "Blast those bloody bugs," he declaimed, and the illusion of elegance vanished. Nevertheless, it had been worth it.

Chapter Five

Having resurrected all the bridges which our own troops had blown in the course of their evacuation, the Imperial Japanese army—better known to us as the IJA—now required us one morning to remove bombs and heavy shells from a huge underground dump outside Kuala Lumpur—better known as KL—and to load them onto trucks, thence onto trains. We refused.

The Japanese brought out all their machineguns and lined them up opposite our mutinous squads. They repeated their request. We agreed.

All that day, and for weeks thereafter, we moved bombs, shells, grenades and explosives out of the dark caverns of the dump. We

loaded them onto waiting lorries and then transshipped them onto trains. We were thus making a direct contribution to the Japanese war effort, for which we did not greatly admire ourselves. The munitions we manhandled were, we realized, to be used against our own Allied troops in New Guinea and the Solomons. It was only natural, therefore, that men should attempt to reassert their pride by various means, none of which would greatly have recommended themselves to the Japanese had they been discovered.

Mortar bombs are extremely susceptible to moisture. Therefore, in the darkest recess of that cavern, men queued up to urinate into case after case of mortar bombs. It required organization and cunning to dampen the maximum number of bombs with the facilities available. We nevertheless felt that we had done well.

Anti-tank guns do not fire very accurately if the rifling in their narrow muzzles is blocked. Accordingly, we poured molten pitch down the barrels—a hit-and-run operation which involved the sacrifice of many a mug or dixie as a receptacle for this boiling-down and carrying to the gun. But it was done.

Sticks of gelignite and grenades—particularly bakelite grenades—are small and easily secreted when one is practised in the art of secreting. Thus, under the inspired leadership of Frank Van Rennan, who taught us the value of cold-blooded bluffing, all those who had headgear wore a hatful of explosives back to Pudu. When we were searched, though our guards looked in all the usual places and anywhere else that was even remotely anatomically feasible, they did not look on our heads. The gaol became infested with sudden death and as a result the mass execution with which we were so constantly being threatened assumed a less one-sided air.

Van Rennan had not so assiduously been acquiring ammunition for nothing. He had come into the gaol voluntarily (after a month's guerilla warfare against the Japanese) to save the native population from further reprisals against his own energetic demolition activities. Already, at that time, one village of two hundred had had all its menfolk killed and all its women mutilated because Van Rennan and his few friends had blown up a Japanese troop train in that area. But though he had surrendered himself, neither he nor his friends intended staying. They proposed leaving the gaol as soon as their plans were complete, heading for the west coast where they had arranged—through native contacts, for they had all lived in Malaya as planters before the war—for a boat to be waiting for them: and from there they were going to sail to India.

It was an ambitious plan and yet it was by no means hopeless. Van Rennan, and the four others involved, had lived in the area and knew it well. Those who were to remain behind had perfected a system whereby the various morning check parades could be faked to conceal their departure for twenty-four hours.

Thus they hoped to evade capture by the local vigilantes and we hoped to delay the hue and cry until they were well out of the way. Of the two the former was the more difficult operation, for the Japanese had stirred all the natives in Malaya into a fiercely anti-European frame of mind by promising them that if Europeans escaped from a point A and were recaptured at a point B, then mass executions would be carried out on all communities between points A and B for having condoned that escape. This meant that travel could only be undertaken by night and that, even then, it must only be undertaken by those who looked like natives and talked like them. For these reasons a tentative suggestion that I might join the escapees was abandoned. Apart from being unable to speak fluent Tamil and Malay, I had fair hair of a conspicuously un-Malayan hue.

In both these respects the escape party itself, however, was well equipped. They had all acquired sarongs and native shoes and shirts: they were dark: they all spoke the local dialects. Moreover, they had stolen sufficient food to enable them to do the whole journey to the coast without asking for any help from the native population.

To make up their numbers to an adequate crew for a trip across the Indian Ocean in an open boat, they accepted two recruits. One an Australian named Bell: the second a young Dutchman called Jan who, as copilot of a *Wilderbeeste*, had already survived death when his plane crashed in flames. He had climbed to the tail of the blazing plane—the only portion not alight—and when it struck the earth, he had been catapulted through the air into the soft foliage of the top of a high jungle tree. He had wandered round for a few days until eventually he had been handed over to the Japanese by Malays. Jan was generally agreed to be lucky and his acquisition by the escape party was accepted by all as an omen of its success.

The big night came and the party left the gaol silently by the side gate, the locks of which had been receiving attention for some time past. Early next morning we Australians fell in on our check parade with the task of covering up for the departure of Jan and Bell. Four men asked permission at the beginning of the parade to go to the latrine (two of whom instead took up blank positions carefully left for them in the rear rank). Though this was simple enough, it was

worrying, for it was quite possible, knowing the Japanese standards of addition, that by adding four alleged absentees to the total of the men who stood before him, the guard—who rejoiced in the name of “Frogface”—would still not reach the total which was daily required of our particular squad.

It was with considerable relief, therefore, that we heard him say, at the conclusion of his count: “*Okay ga—yazumé.*” “OK—stand at ease.” Now all that remained to be seen was whether three similar such bluffs had worked with three of Frogface’s equivalents on three other check parades so that all the escapees were covered. It was not until the figures for the entire gaol had been received and checked that any one parade was dismissed, so we had to stand there and wait.

We watched Frogface approach us. Would he dismiss us or would one of the other squads have slipped up, which would involve the whole gaol in a recount?

“*Okay ga,*” he grunted, “all men go.” We were dismissed and the escape party now had twelve hours’ start.

That, at least, was the theory. Unfortunately, the practice was different. Before they had even cleared the outskirts of KL, the small band of escapees had been seized by natives and had been forced to fight their way free.

Twice more during the night march natives attempted to grapple with them and at dawn a large patrol of Japanese infantry had suddenly surrounded them as they studied their maps. Escape was impossible.

At lunchtime they were back in the gaol—their return witnessed by a horrified community of prisoners. They were shackled, looked badly shaken and pale and were not allowed near us. We shouted out to them and they smiled back wanly. They were taken to the cells above the guardhouse—the ones we had all originally inhabited before our move to the main wing of the gaol.

We asked could we give them some food. The request was refused. Instead the guard commander asked some very awkward questions as to just how, with eight men missing, the gaol had nevertheless managed to return its full numbers on the morning check parade. Without any hesitation at all, the blame was cast squarely upon the shoulders of Frogface and his three revolting friends and their combined inability to count. The guard commander retired to think it over.

In a manner typically Japanese, when he did think it over he

went off at a tangent. The recaptured men, he recollected, had had in their possession grenades. There might, he thought, be other grenades in the gaol. Fortunately he said so to one of the guards, and the English duty officer, who was a bright lad, heard him.

Consequently when, five minutes later, the guard suddenly swept through cell block after cell block looking for bombs, they swept through just three minutes behind two officers and a rice sack. Into the rice sack went every piece of explosive material we possessed. As the tour continued the sack grew heavier, but the officers struggled gamely on until they had collected all the incriminating evidence. Then, just about thirty seconds ahead of the guard, they lugged the sack into the outer courtyard, dragged it to the fountain there, and deposited it into the top of the tall lily-shaped basin out of which the water spouted into the main fountain below. When the guards appeared in the courtyard, they observed two officers playing rather silly games in the water. With curt "*Currah*"s they ordered them out. Then they themselves went back to the guardhouse and reported that there were no grenades in the gaol. We resumed our breathing.

After three days, however, in which they had been allowed no food, no water and no latrine facilities, our escape party suddenly appeared in the gaol's entrance just outside the guardhouse. All their gear had been dumped near them—haversacks and clothing—but they themselves were still fiercely shackled and filthy dirty. They looked very weak.

The Japanese motioned them towards the gaol gate. Inquiringly, Van Rennan gestured with his foot towards the pile of kitbags. The Japanese jerked his head negatively, emphatically. It could mean only one thing. They knew it; and we knew it.

They were brave men, those eight. Their heads went up, and while we shouted cheerful remarks at them, trying not to let them know what we sensed, they grinned back at us so that we shouldn't sense what they knew. They went through the big gates. They were prodded and shoved into a truck. They turned to face us; we smiled. Then the truck lurched off and the big gates shut. They were gone. "There," I thought with a lump in my throat, "but for the grace of a mop of sun-bleached hair, goes Braddon."

The Indian who drove the truck told us later that they were taken to K.L. cemetery, there made to dig their own graves and then shot down into them. So ended the first, most promising and last, escape plot of Pudu.

THE YEAR WAS NOW jogging steadily along. The emperor of Japan—to our unanimous regret—survived yet another birthday (the occasion being celebrated by the lavish gift to each man of two half-inch cubes of canned pineapple). Beards were luxuriant and coiffures poetic. We even played fiercely contested games of baseball on the communal triangle of lawn—a practice which ceased abruptly when we defeated a team put up by our guards. A faint flavour was now added to our meagre ration of rice by the addition of the few native vegetables we grew in the gaol garden (mainly a Malayan root most aptly named *ubi kayu*—which means “wooden potato”).

Tokyo time was applied to all towns in Malaya. We were ordered to talk only in terms of Tokyo time. We accordingly stole an old clock and placed it prominently in our cell block. It always read British Malayan time and we ordered our life by it. A foolish gesture, perhaps, but in a life where little more than gestures was possible, most gratifying!

The Japanese declared generously that they would pay us for our work—ten cents a day. Thus, if one worked every day of the month, one earned the lavish sum of three dollars. This would buy a small handful of dried fish, a little coconut oil in which to fry it, and perhaps a banana or two.

As soon as we received our pay, we seized the opportunity to do something for the men in the hospital in our courtyard. We all gave twenty-five cents from our three dollars and this Padre Duckworth took into town and with it bought soap and food and odd titbits. No money was ever better invested. It was sheer delight to see the faces of those near-corpses, who for months had been living in the most complete squalor, as the little padre dished out his purchases to each one.

We also, at this time, learned how to increase our own comfort by laying any pieces of wearing apparel which became louse-infested on ants' nests. The ants then devoured not only the lice but also their eggs, which were laid deep in seams and un-get-at-able corners. Having rid ourselves of the itch of lice the next step was to rid ourselves of the itch of beards. We had our beards removed with a razor ground out from a stolen Japanese bayonet. It was not a comfortable operation, but thenceforward we were clean-shaven—that is, we each had one shave a week which, by the standards of those days, was clean-shaven. Our barber was equipped with scissors and clippers as well (these latter mysteriously acquired by the padre) and so kept us all fairly tidy.

Strangely enough, our life was almost totally devoid of friction. It is remarkable to record that in the Pudu community and the much larger POW community at Changi and all the camps in Thailand, over a period of four years, there were no cases of murder, remarkably few of theft (from our own men, that is—the Japanese, of course, were fair game) and only three suicides. Very few other such large communities over such a long period could boast similarly. It was a tribute to the Anglo-Saxons' ability to live together.

It was natural, however, that such an environment should breed extreme philosophies. Thus, in Pudu a small group—very small—became fanatically religious and convinced themselves that *all* ills could be cured solely by faith. Part of their way of life consisted of praying vociferously and fervently (during which they banged their foreheads on the gaol's concrete floors with thuds that were distressing); and part of refusing even such little medical treatment as was available.

Since they all had ulcers and dysentery, it was a fine point of gaol ethics whether they should be forcibly treated or allowed to pursue their own path of prayer. When the cult showed no signs of spreading it was generally accepted that they were entitled to their own point of view. And when—a month later—the last of the small group died, religious fanaticism vanished from prisoner-of-war life in Pudu.

WE WERE SENT TO A LIMEKILN, quite a large group of us, to bag up lime and put it on lorries. A filthy job, which scorched all the oil out of one's skin, leaving it cracked and leathery. And when you sweated the lime burned holes in your flesh—small black holes that you couldn't clean out, so they just grew deeper.

An Australian rebelled and was soon afterwards sent back to the gaol unconscious for his pains. But when the whole party returned at night, he had warned our friends what was happening and they were ready for us.

As we marched in—our legs and arms covered in those black burning holes—we were seized by the waiting Pudu-ites, stripped and thoroughly anointed with coconut oil. Every ounce of oil in the gaol—bought with those hard-earned three dollars a month—was there waiting for us. It made no difference who you were, what your unit or nationality—you were smeared and rubbed until at last all those black burns were clean of the lime that burned into them and all the precious oil had gone. It was another of those moments when the generosity of one's fellow men made the life of Pudu seem well worthwhile.

A party of us went to work one day on the outskirts of KL in one of those chaotic dumps in which the Japanese seem to specialize. It contained lengths of railway line, mortar bombs, drums of petrol, three anti-tank guns, coils of signal wire, and a wireless set—army type. We stacked the petrol, recoiled the wire, wet the mortar bombs in the traditional manner, shovelled sand into the breech mechanism of the guns, loaded the railway lines onto trucks and endured all day the bellows from a more than usually repulsive little Japanese.

At the end of the day it seemed only fair that one of the lads should steal the wireless set. It was bundled into a rice bag and slung swiftly and unceremoniously from one man to another as we were searched. At the gaol we had another search and felt a certain apprehension. It is remarkable how prominent a field radio in a sack can seem on a search parade. In the midst of this search, however, the Almighty weighed in heavily on our side with a sudden violent tropical storm. Our searchers lost all interest in their quest for contraband and scuttled back to the guardroom. We strolled casually past them and down to our cells—bearing a sackful of potential BBC news bulletins.

A few weeks later the set—under the loving care of the small group of officers to whom it had been entrusted—was coaxed into contacting London. For the first time, the resounding triumphs of Duckworth's well-dressed Eurasian gave way to official news. We found the switch-over quite effortless—the completely irrational confidence in ultimate victory which ran through the veins of every man more than countered the momentary shock of the actual events of late 1942. To the accompaniment of the Nazis' boasts about the imminent destruction of Russia and the capture of Suez, and with the shrill demands of the Japanese that India should join the Co-Prosperity Sphere and Australia abandon the cause of the British exploiters ringing out all around us, we left the gaol each day to work. But we left more content than ever before in 1942 because we now had what all prisoners of war crave more than anything else—news from home.

A NEW FIELD OF WORK was opened up for us by the Japanese decision to move everything in the local Austin car works from wherever it was in the building to some other place in the building. During one of our midday breaks, however, a Japanese approached us to air his knowledge of English and gloat. "War," he announced, "finish-u



Japanese Kempeitai (Gestapo) lance-corporal, typical of the prison guards.

soon." "Go on, eh, Nippon?" we encouraged him. "How's that?" "Birrima, you know?" asked the Nip—we said, yes, we knew Burma, a word the Japs could never master. "Indiah, you know?" asked the Nip—we said, yes, we knew India. "Australiah, you know?" asked the Nip—we said, yes, we knew Australia.

"All," said the Nip, with an embracing gesture towards his own bosom, "all Nippon." We laughed heartily and the round yellow face with the shaved eyebrows and the brown eyes glittering went as close to a flush of rage as the Japanese can manage. "Nippon Number One," he screamed.

A solid chorus of voices assured him that Nippon, on the contrary, was Number Ten.

"Tojo Number One," he bellowed.

The Argyll nearest him replied: "Churchill Number One—Tojo Number Two Hundred." The Japanese looked to the rest of us for confirmation of this astounding statement. We did not fail him.

"Churchill Number One—Tojo Number Two Hundred," we declared with authority. It was on! Our party was at once fallen in in two ranks and the entire guard, armed with lumps of timber, then marched up and down slugging anyone whose face did not appeal to them—which seemed to be most of us.

After twenty minutes, the mass bashing still continued and the Japanese—far from getting over it by their outburst—seemed only to be whipping themselves up into a state of murder. Half a dozen of them ran, flailing indiscriminately, up and down our lines. This was one of those occasions when light-hearted bashing had passed into the realms of possible massacre. Our survival now depended upon our taking everything standing upright and in silence (to fall to the ground or to complain under these conditions always sent the Japanese completely out of control).

Typically, the Japanese picked on the biggest man on the parade—an Australian. Standing before him, the smallest guard hit him with everything he had. Lumps of wood, his bayonet, his rifle. The Australian took it all. Both ranks of men stiffened with revulsion and a muttering broke out. Another few seconds and, consequences regardless, our discretion would have been abandoned. It was an Argyll who saved us. Leaping out of the front rank, the little Scot, young and furious, sprang on the guard and rocked him with a clicking left to the chin.

The silence that ensued was startling. The Japanese stood dazed with blood trickling from the righthand corner of his mouth. All the

other guards stood with their hands on their bayonets. Two ranks of prisoners waited, tense.

The Japanese moved, raising a hand slowly to his mouth to wipe it. Then, as he lowered the hand and noticed the blood on his fingers, the stillness broke. He screamed with rage and flung himself at the Argyll. Simultaneously the other guards hurled themselves forward and, before we could move, the youngster was lying broken on the ground. The episode was over. We Australians carried him back to the gaol. We did what we could. There was nothing he could not have had so long as we ourselves had it. He died a few days later.

WHEREVER THERE ARE TWO OR THREE gathered together who come from the United Kingdom, there you will have song. Listening to the Pommies singing was quite a favourite pastime with us Australians. Lacking their unselfconsciousness about singing (not to mention their skill in harmony, and their voices), we seldom burst into song ourselves; but we enjoyed hearing theirs. The corridors of gaols make excellent sounding boards for songs well sung, and not many nights passed without a good lump of vocal nostalgia after darkness had fallen. It was pleasant—or sad, I'm not sure which—to go out to the courtyard as they sang so strongly and pick out the stars that formed the Southern Cross and feel "well, at home, at this time, they can see that too." In the absence of any letters between us there was some little comfort to be derived from that thought.

But as well as the stars, there was the tropical lightning which flashed and flared on the horizon and which—a hundred times since our captivity—had had us out there thinking: "This time it's shell fire. This time our people have landed over there on the coast," and we would go back inside and stand with our faces against the bars, our fingers round them, trying to make out if those flares and flashes really were bombs and shells. Then, late in the night, we would give up hope and crawl back to our cells to lie on the concrete, whilst upstairs—indifferent to everything except their own pain—padded round and round, round and round, the haggard band of those who suffered from happy feet.

The happy-feet men in fact, with those who suddenly succumbed to cardiac beriberi, were our main worry now. Two or three times a week—in the midst of our massaging the soles of those whose feet pained them—a man would suddenly fall flat on his face on the concrete and when one turned him over he was dead from cardiac beriberi—the heart, suddenly seized by lack of vitamins, stopped.

There was no warning, no symptoms, just sudden death. A disconcerting disease to have in one's midst.

And the happy-foot cases seemed to be losing interest in life. Though we set aside the best of our rations as supplementary diet for them—rich vegetable stews that made the mouth water—they were not interested. They were too tired even to collect it at meal times. Too languid to eat if you brought it to them. I became alarmed when Hugh at last refused his helping of the delicious stew I made almost daily by scavenging vegetable peelings from the Japanese garbage heaps.

"What shall I do?" I asked the MO.

"Leave him alone," the MO advised. "It's hard, I know, but they must be left so alone that they're *compelled* to do everything for themselves. Then they might feel hungry again and eat."

So, feeling like a murderer—particularly when I caught the startled look in Hugh's blue eyes as I deserted him each meal time—I left him alone. It was a most difficult decision to make, but it did eventually work.

ROUSED AT LAST by the lamentable absence of our own voices from the nightly sessions of song, we Australians laid our plans. First we negotiated with the Japanese for a piano which we had seen in a brothel of theirs. Pianos, we pointed out, were not essential in brothels. Indifferently, they agreed. Could we have it? Since they themselves could not play it, they again agreed. Pudu Gaol thus acquired its first musical instrument.

We then started working to put on a show. Whilst all those who had any pretence to a voice practised assiduously at such indigenous products as "Waltzing Matilda" and "The Maoris' Farewell", another group of us frantically rehearsed the well-known lines of "Pansy, The Mill Girl" and a very vulgar ballet. We rehearsed in the cell set aside for coffin making—an essential industry in our life—but enjoyed ourselves nevertheless.

The concert was staged at one end of the well between the cell floors in the British lines. It was watched with wild enthusiasm by the gaol's entire population—including the guards—tier upon tier of spectators gazing down into the well. To ecstatic cries of "Encore, encore!" the show concluded and we all sang "God Save the King"—a song in which the Japanese joined with enthusiasm because it, along with "Dinah", seemed to be one of the few Western tunes they knew.

From then onwards, once a week, we had concerts after the day's work. The officers gave a concert; Gaelic laments, so dear to the hearts of the Highland regiments, became well known to us; the Welsh sang hymns and army songs with equal facility and enjoyment; the Englishmen roared "Bless 'em All". At those moments Pudu Gaol seemed a real home.

And then, quite unexpectedly, in November 1942, the Japanese suddenly announced, "All men go to Singapore," and for the first time we experienced that strange prisoner-of-war obsession of being reluctant to abandon what one had made one's home.

We were split up into parties, mainly according to nationalities, and left. The Australians were one of the first parties to go, and the entire gaol, led by the little padre, fell out to say goodbye. Presents were exchanged and as those who remained for later parties shouted and waved, we marched out of Pudu's big gates for the last time. Carrying our sick, we headed down the long road to the railway station. This time the natives did not spit at us and stone us—they had already had a bellyful of Co-Prosperity. Everywhere we noticed the desolation which Japanese administration had brought: the drains blocked and foul, the once immaculate *padi* fields now rank with high grass and weeds.

We clambered into cattle trucks, thirty or more to a truck. We laid the men with happy feet on the floor of the truck, then huddled ourselves in what space remained. In the centre of the truck, in between the doors in either wall, sat two guards, back to back, watching over us. There was a dixie of cooked rice for the trip, rice which was already sour with fermentation.

The train started. A day and a half later we reached Singapore. There, we were driven to Changi—the camp of about 10,000 Allied prisoners of war on the northeastern tip of the island. The second phase of our POW life had begun.

Chapter Six

To us who came from Pudu, Changi was unbelievable.

We arrived in our truckloads and were greeted with official aloofness by a duty officer. This latter at once addressed us upon our duties as prisoners of war and the need for discipline—he then lost interest in us and said: "All right, gentlemen, break off." So we broke off. Howls of rage. "Gentlemen," it appeared, meant only

officers, of whom there were two in our midst; the remainder of us were emphatically *not*, he gave us to understand, gentlemen.

Changi was unbelievable not because of the mass of men in it (which fluctuated between 7,000 and 17,000) but because of the official attitude behind its administration. The command determined to maintain full military discipline, regardless of circumstances or psychology, waiting upon the day when Malaya would be invaded by a British force. Accordingly, two principles seemed to guide every decision. One, to retain full regimental staffs pottering round achieving nothing useful at all; two, to preserve the Officers/Other Ranks distinction by as many tactless, unnecessary orders as possible.

This latter was equally hard on both parties. It meant that officers could not freely mix with their friends who were ORs. It meant that officers, far from waiting till their men ate and then eating the same food themselves, ate—under orders—in a separate mess and usually before the men. It meant that officers were allowed to keep poultry, ORs were not. It meant that there was fuel for an officers' club to cook light snacks, for the ORs there was not.

All of which casts no reflection upon the officers concerned any more than it did upon the men. They were under orders. Those orders were inspired by a sincere conviction at top level that it was absolutely necessary—in the cause of an imminent invasion, which, in fact, never came—to preserve the class distinction by privileges not based upon responsibility. It is no cause for complaint. But as a most relevant factor in the life of those days, and one of the things most difficult then to comprehend, it must be recorded.

In the same way, to the naive Pudu-ite, Changi had other shocks. There were men with courage but no scruples who went outside the wire each night to collect tinned food from old army dumps in the rubber and then returned to sell their booty at black-market prices to their brethren back in camp. There was also a drug-selling ring which shamelessly traded M and B tablets from our own British hospital—tablets more priceless than diamonds—for bully beef from the Malays and Chinese. A ring which could not publicly be stamped out because, it was once rumoured, some senior officers were involved and to prosecute them would be “bad for morale”. For whose? we Pudu-ites wondered.

But then every community has its villains—and if these follies of human nature became obvious to us for the first time in Changi, so did other things which were wholly delightful. For one thing, the common man of Changi greeted us with overwhelming warmth. For

another, we were all equipped with a shirt and a pair of shorts and boots. There were also miles of grass and trees, and the hospital. The hospital, though badly bomb-damaged (like most of the buildings in Chang), was a joy. It had beds and sheets, anaesthetics and drugs; instruments and an operating theatre. Though there was not a hundredth of what was required at least there was something. To it went all our happy-feet cases and, for the first time since they had been stricken, we felt that they had a chance of getting better.

An extra fillip was given to one's sense of well-being in Chang by the sudden arrival at this time of a few Red Cross parcels and some mail. Though most of us did not get letters, we all received a couple of cigarettes and the flavouring of our rice ration with those few newly-arrived tins of condensed milk and bully beef made a most welcome change. The main thing, though, was that something tangible from the outside world had got through to us.

The day's work, however, caused men like myself some trouble. The command maintained, with admirable lack of understanding, that everybody must be kept fully occupied all day. Thus, when I was ordered to sweep a concrete path—a job which was obviously necessary since absolute cleanness meant health—I swept it quite happily and very thoroughly. But when, having completed the task just before midday, an officer arrived and asked: "Finished, Gunner?" and I replied, "Yes," and he said, "All right, sweep it again!" I became very aggressive. Thereupon he explained that this was for the good of my morale—how we hated that phrase—and that if I continued to be aggressive, he would put me on a charge, so I at once became placid. But when, after a few weeks, I was posted onto a Singapore working party, due to leave Chang almost immediately, I was not very sorry.

I went over to the hospital to say goodbye to Hugh—now looking less wan but still very ill: then onto a truck which transported us back to the realities of prisoner-of-war life—to a native hutted camp set in the middle of a mudflat with lots of Japanese guards. This swamp revelled in the euphemistic title of River Valley. It had been built by the British to house native refugees and had, very sensibly, been deserted by them as early as possible and left to the mosquitoes, the frogs and the bugs who now, as we entered, reigned supreme.

RIVER VALLEY CAMP lay on either side of an especially foul little stream from which we were in the habit of fishing frogs for the purpose of conducting frog races and gambling thereon, our three

dollar monthly pay cheque having by this time been rendered valueless by inflation.

Apart from the frogs and the foul little stream, there were rows upon rows of dilapidated huts with two tiers of bamboo decking running down each side of a mud passageway. On each of these slept hundreds of men, whilst in the decks and the roofing there lurked many billions of bugs.

Our work lay in the docks of Singapore's Kepple Harbour—in the Go-downs. These Go-downs had, in the weeks just before Christmas 1941, been stacked with the food and gifts that Singapore was to buy in the festive season. The festive season, regrettably, had deteriorated into a war which we did not win. The food and gifts were now being sorted, packed and reshipped by our conquerors.

Needless to say a great deal of the material we handled was "sent off". Food especially went where it did us most good: the ill-fated gifts were sold (to the accompaniment of the usual bitter wrangling) to the native population.

Came the unprecedented day when in Go-down 2 we found a mixed cargo. For eight riotous hours we ate chocolates and cough jujubes, drank bay rum, cough mixture, cod-liver oil and essence of vanilla—in equal and indiscriminate quantities: applied hair tonic to the hair, face cream to the face and iodex to almost everything; mixed handfuls of sugar with handfuls of herrings in tomato sauce and devoured the resulting mess, and sold lipsticks by the dozen to the Chinese outside the back door. It couldn't last, of course, but by the time we were caught and severely thrashed, I had gorged to the utmost and smeared myself liberally with oils and lotions. I reeked like a chemist's shop. I also had twenty dollars strapped with adhesive tape to my armpit and I had found a truck going back to Changi and had placed on it a packet of tinned food for Hugh. I felt well pleased.

Next day we found, to no one's surprise, that we were working not in the food stores but in the Go-downs that housed five-hundred-pound bombs instead. And then, for day after day, anything up to sixteen hours a day, we staggered under the weight of those bombs in their crude deal crates. They tore the skin and flesh on one's shoulders and the bashings were incessant.

River Valley mercifully was only a brief interlude in our prison life; it was not, however, a dull one. The IJA demanded "volunteers" to broadcast their propaganda to the Allies. Unanimously we refused. They threatened; we still refused. They

cajoled, offering us the dubious privilege of a monthly visit to their army-issue geisha girls (rather battered pre-war models); we refused. The matter was then dropped.

That same day, in the course of the pursuit of a particularly agile frog (with which he hoped to win hundreds of dollars in our frog races), one of our number allowed enthusiasm to outstrip discretion and followed it some hundreds of yards outside the barbed wire which surrounded our camp. He was arrested by the guards, who announced their intention of shooting him for attempting to escape.

We could see him tied up to a post outside the guardhut. Night was falling. If he was to be saved, swift action had to be taken.

Every man in the camp at once thronged the parade ground opposite the guardhut and indicated that if any violence was offered the froghunter, they would tear the guards to pieces. The guard commander, therefore, agreed—for the first time—to hear our commanding officer's version of the froghunter's story. And when he did (surprised that it was not an escape attempt he had foiled), he actually released the captive unharmed.

Hard upon this episode came the year's best rumour. *The Russians were in Greece!* For about six hours the camp seethed with excitement at this overnight advance from Stalingrad to Athens. Then the sad truth was unearthed. It appeared that the Japanese proposed working us on extra shifts: for that purpose, for the moment, *the rations were increased*. Sadly we settled back to hearing about a war which was still largely defensive.

Until, that is, news came through that the Coral Sea Battle was won. The Japanese endeavoured to cover up their defeat by fantastic claims which involved the sinking of more Allied vessels of war in one clash than were ever listed in all the copies of *Janes' Fighting Ships*. Perhaps because of the open derision with which these propaganda efforts were greeted by us they staged a sudden search for secret radios. They found none—although one lay in the rice store, one in an open dustbox in a hut, casually camouflaged with rubbish, and one in the bottom half of an army-issue waterbottle.

The remainder of our stay in the valley consisted of bomb-loading for the Japanese and stealing for ourselves—highlighted by such diversions as the sudden craze developed by Australian soldiers for tattoos (a craze catered for, with complete lack of artistry but the usual regrettable permanency of all tattoos, by one of our more businesslike companions who bought ink and needles from the natives).

As well as that, I remember reading *Winnie the Pooh* three times (to the great disgust—at first—of my friends). When at last, however, they could stand my frequent bursts of laughter at the antics of Eeyore and the poems of Pooh no longer, they began furtively dipping into it themselves, and eventually it went round both tiers of our overcrowded and verminous hut. *Winnie the Pooh* is a book which all adults, particularly those whose lives have become difficult, should read.

I also remember the ritual of several men who daily collected one matchboxful of bugs and carefully cast them into the guardhut as they marched past and out to work. I remember the Irishman who, being responsible for guiding a Japanese driver on a bulldozer, had quite deliberately waved the Nipponese gentleman on over a forty-foot drop and then persuaded the senior Japanese engineer that the accident had occurred because the driver was drunk!

A few weeks later we returned to Changi—returned to celebrate our first Christmas in captivity and almost a year in which, for most of us, no word from us to home or from home to us had been heard.

CHANGI WAS MUCH THE SAME. Officers still looked gorgeous and wore pips on their bosoms so that no one might mistake them for anything else. Orders of the day were promulgated (as the hideous word was) with abandon and were usually superfluous. All the work that was required of the men in camp was what was necessary to keep the area spotlessly clean, the gardens growing and the kitchen fires burning.

The Australian concert party had developed into a group who already gave signs of becoming the backbone of Changi entertainment—which entertainment was to be a key factor in maintaining our high morale in the ensuing years, and in the preservation of which our command (to whom I have not so far been excessively kind) must be awarded the fullest possible praise.

The concert party also flourished because it commanded the enthusiastic support of a Japanese interpreter called Terai. Terai, peacetime professor of English in a Nipponese university, was deemed by almost everyone to be pro-British. He was young, slim, had a pleasant face and was always glad to find in Singapore such improbable commodities as strings for a violin, or women's gowns, or make-up materials or whatever it was that the performers needed. All he asked in return was a little conversation—preferably not about the war, which he hated.

Meanwhile, Changi's irrepressible energy burst out in a thousand different directions. There were courses on every subject and every language; there were societies to discuss every hobby and every sport; there were little theatres playing everything from Shakespeare to *Journey's End*; there were concerts of classical music and concert parties which weren't classical at all.

Christmas day came and we ate enormous meals of rice—having saved a small portion of our ration every day for weeks past. We also distributed rather pathetic attempts at Christmas cards and such quaint presents as one banana or a little grated-up coconut. The Pommies sang their carols and the entire camp sent toys made of rubber wood to the English children interned with their parents in the gaol a mile down the road. In spite of the Japanese the spirit of Christmas was never stronger.

APART FROM THE PLEASANT COMPANY and the pleasant surroundings and the pinpricks of incessant regimentation, my two most predominant recollections of that time are the sick parades and the fear of being sent away on another working party

Sick parades had become a daily factor in almost every man's life—the universal complaint being lack of vitamins. Until one has lived with the revulsion against one's own body that a pair of leprous-looking legs creates, one cannot fully appreciate the significance of these conditions.

The doctors worked ceaselessly. They created a recipe for making yeast (unfortunately defeated because it could not keep up with the demand). They invented a machine which extracted a black juice from lalang grass (of which Malaya has a superabundance) and they persuaded us by their own example to drink this juice, though its taste was surpassingly vile. They attempted endless variations and permutations of the available drugs, which were sulphur, lysol, mercurochrome and acraflavine. They circumcized practically every man who was not already circumcized. They never ceased improvising and pondering.

Fear of being sent away on a working party was also very real in those times. It sprang from the strange unwillingness we all experienced to move anywhere once we had settled. That it was a fear for which there was considerable basis, however, is not to be doubted. One has only to look at the annihilation which befell the party sent to Borneo, the drowning of shiploads of men en route for Japan, the decimation of the railway workers in Thailand and

Burma, to realize that, intuitive though the fear was, it was most sensible.

So, to the accompaniment of endless sick parades, apprehension, rumours, and the news that abroad the Germans in Africa and Russia were now steadily being pushed back, the first months of 1943 passed almost uneventfully.

Then with a sudden bang, the Japanese staged a terrific search for radios. Suspected operators were shipped off to Outrim Road Gaol (where they endured ghastly conditions), the National Anthem was banned and the camp was warned that parties were to be made ready to leave for Thailand.

Those who remained, it was rumoured (correctly), were to build an aerodrome below Changi where now there was only a swamp and two hills.

The Thailand parties, the Japanese said, were to go to comfortable camps with plenty of rations. They pointed out that Thailand—unlike Malaya, which imports half the rice it eats—was self-supporting. They urged that sick men be included in the party lists so that they might convalesce. They suggested sweetly that band instruments—even a piano—might help to while away the leisure hours of those who were transplanted.

Thus, amidst a welter of contradictory reports, faked sickness and genuine attempts to transfer hospital cases to better conditions, the first party left Changi. It left with a large proportion of men who came direct from their beds in hospital, plus the piano, plus all sorts of paraphernalia suitable for a convalescent camp under a civilized foe.

A short time later a second party was conscripted with Terai as its interpreter. Hugh was put on its list, though still a bed case in the hospital. I, after much heart-searching (for I felt that all was not well with this Thailand venture), decided that I should go with him. I therefore asked that my name be added to its number.

Next day we were crammed, thirty men and all our possessions (as well as our share of the force's cooking utensils, medical panniers, agricultural implements and guards) into each truck. As the train chugged erratically over the Causeway, back towards KL, I found myself thinking that all this was most inauspicious.

Thirty seconds later Singapore lay behind us and we steamed into Johore. We were to know no further peace of mind or body until, a year later, the fortunate survivors would cross that Causeway again and get back onto the Island.

Chapter Seven

The journey to Thailand was unpleasant. It took five days. By day the steel carriages scorched with the heat of the sun: by night they were like iceboxes. Water was the main difficulty. One could overlook the absence of food, but in that intense heat thirst became an obsession. We soon learned to steal out whenever the train stopped and fill up one of the dixies from the engine—greasy water, but boiled, so consumable. Usually the men who went were caught and thrashed, but the expeditions, being necessary, continued.

At one such stop Terai, the interpreter, came down to our truck. I was reading.

"What are you reading, Mr. Braddon?" he asked quietly.

"George Bernard Shaw," I told him.

"Like it?" he queried.

"Some of it," I said. At that he launched into a long dissertation on *St. Joan* which was only terminated when the two men with the dixie were dragged back by three guards and savagely punched. Terai watched the bashing with evident distress.

"This is very unpleasant," he said. "I am sorry." Then he repeated: "This is very unpleasant," and left.

We crossed the Thailand border and eventually the train ground to a halt and we were ordered out, to the accompaniment of the usual bellowing, onto a rather dreary-looking platform.

Anxiously I took stock of my possessions. One waterbottle, one mess tin, one spoon, toothbrush and razor; the complete works of GBS, *Mein Kampf* and an *Oxford Book of English Verse*. Having made certain that they were all there, I bundled them into the ricebag I used as a haversack and, with the rest of the party, started off down a filthy dust track towards the promised convalescent camp.

I wondered how Hugh was. Ironically enough I hadn't seen him since we got on the train at Singapore, where the authorities had suddenly been smitten with the bright idea that it would be more efficient if the whole force fell in in alphabetical groups. Consequently, men found themselves separated from their inseparable friends and one of the few comforts of our lives was removed from a five-day journey and the ensuing march.

The convalescent camp turned out to be native huts, mud-floored, littered with excrement, seething with flies. It was bad enough for those of us who were fit, but for the men who had been uprooted

from Changi's hospital it was like a death sentence. The five-day train trip had not improved their condition. The sour, fermented rice and the greasy water of those days had brought on fresh bouts of dysentery to almost all of them. They looked drawn and one felt fearful for them.

Without warning, the Japanese swept down on the camp and searched it. Though they found nothing it was only at the expense of our dumping all grenades, bayonets and daggers down the camp well. The radio, being secreted in an accordion which the owner played gaily throughout the search, was not discovered.

The Japanese, through Terai, then ordered us to fill our waterbottles and fall in for a night march.

"How far?" we asked.

"Twenty miles," was the answer.

All that night we marched with our respective sacks and packs on our backs; the other tools slung on poles and carried by pairs of men in turn; the sick, as they collapsed, being supported by whomever was nearest. The Japanese at the head of the column set a brisk pace and the Japanese at the rear used a liberal rifle butt to ensure that this pace was maintained. I soon found myself slipping into my prison habit of counting. Each step I counted. Thousand after thousand—until I nearly went mad. The sun was scorching down again before we reached the next camp high on the water-eroded banks of a swift-running river.

The day was spent bartering with the Thais to obtain as much food as possible to sustain us over the next night's march, which we had now been told we were to undertake. Anxious about Hugh, I searched him out and found him in the hands of one Harry Peck.

Harry, as a thirteen-year-old Cockney lad, had decided that he would emigrate to Australia. He had landed in Sydney dressed in the height of Cockney fashion, complete with check suit and heavy cap. At Parkes in New South Wales, Harry, still in checks and cap, got off the train to meet his new employer—in a khaki shirt, widebrimmed hat, army boots and dungaree pants. They gazed at one another in mutual astonishment. Then the farmer said: "Get in," so Harry hopped aboard the buggy and they jogged out to the farm. There Harry lived in a galvanized-iron hut, quite alone except for the company of a large carpet snake, which slept in the rafters over his head, eating mice. He was terrified of this snake.

He learned to plough a straight furrow, to ring-bark a tree, to sink fence posts, to stretch barbed wire. He knew no one except the carpet

snake and, as soon as he had saved a little money, he left the farm and farming and the carpet snake for good and went into the nearby town

There, with his savings, he bought a small share in a vegetable shop. Soon he had enough to buy out his partner. Then he bought another shop. When war broke out Harry was earning two thousand pounds a year and had great plans for the future. But he gave up all his plans and volunteered for the AIF. Two years later he was on the banks of a river in Thailand looking after Hugh.

With his penchant for trade, Harry had bought some coffee and sugar from the Thais, and he and Hugh were now doing a brisk business selling the brew at ten cents a cupful to thirsty marchers. Harry's wide grin was cheering in those dismal surroundings.

"No wonder they call you a nation of shopkeepers," I observed. "How are you doing?"

"Fine," said Harry. "Fine—have a cuppa coffec."

"How much?" I demanded cautiously. Harry looked offended and, as Hugh approached, said: "Give the gentleman a cuppa coffee, Hughie." Hugh grinned, and doled it out into my mess tin.

Then the whistle blew for a parade and I had to leave. "See you next stop," I said to Hugh, and he grinned again, but looked much too frail to be doing another twenty-mile march that night.

"I'll look after the kid," Harry promised.

"Good on you," I thanked him. "See you later, Harry. Bye-bye, Hugh," and I made my way back to where my section was falling in.

To my inquiries as to what it was all about, I was told that there was another search on. Almost immediately Terai appeared with some guards and our few possessions were once again ransacked. Terai flicked his way through my Shaw and the book of verse.

"I am sorry," he said, "but you had better leave these with me."

"You mean you're confiscating them," I said. Terai shrugged apologetic shoulders. I asked about *Mein Kampf*. He indicated that Nippon would not take it amiss if I read *Mein Kampf*. But Shaw and the *Oxford Book of English Verse*—again the apologetic shrug.

Ten minutes later the march started again and I slung my bag across my shoulders—a bag lighter now that the complete wisdom of Shaw and Oxford's distillation of English verse had been removed from it—and strode off with the rest, realizing irritably that thenceforth my mental companion for however long we remained in Thailand was to be none other than Adolf Hitler.

This second night's march saw further casualties from exhaustion

and the guards' bad temper and when, in the morning, we were eventually halted at a flat, parched piece of scrub, we just dropped and slept

When we woke we found that the Thais had stolen everything that was not closely guarded. We asked about the previous party. The Thais pointed, grinning amiably, straight into the heart of the jungle and mountains. So at last we knew for certain. The convalescent camp was a complete fiction. All the men in Thailand were to be used on the long-rumoured construction of a railway connecting Bangkok with Rangoon. Japanese losses at sea had been so enormous of late that they now proposed a land line of supply to their forces in Burma instead. We were to build that land line. Remembering that the British, who first surveyed the route, had abandoned the prospect as impossible because of the cost to human life involved in those fever and plague-stricken mountains, it was difficult not to feel a little sick at heart.

The Japanese gave us a cursory medical examination and vaccinated each man by slashing his arm with a lancet and splashing serum onto the cut. Finally they injected a few cc's of something which they declared—cheerful thought—was anti-cholera serum. Then, without more ado, amid torrential rain, we set out on the march. In a few minutes we left the road and paddled our way into the jungle. For the first time in my life I heard a British column start off on a long march without the cheerful sound of singing. There were no marching songs that night nor for any of the rest of the seven nights of the ordeal.

Those hundred or so miles through the jungle are very confused now. They were repetitions of vicious bashings by guards of those who fell, of the plundering by Thais of stragglers, and of slogging along through knee-deep mud in blinding rain and inky darkness.

There were highlights, of course: the way when any man fell his comrades, however exhausted themselves, at once picked him up and carried him until his strength returned sufficiently to enable him to carry on alone; the way men accepted their share of the impedimenta and carried it for their allotted time and then passed it on, with never a complaint or a thought of cheating on their shift.

Above all, there was the extraordinary courage and gentleness, and the incredible endurance, of the medical officer, Major Kevin Fagan. Not only did he treat any man needing treatment to the best of his ability, he also carried men who fell; he carried the kit of men in danger of falling, and he marched up and down the whole length

of the column throughout its entire progress. If we marched one hundred miles through the jungle, Kevin Fagan marched two hundred. And when, at the end of our night's trip, we collapsed and slept, he was there to clean blisters, set broken bones and render first aid. And all of it he did with the courtesy of a society specialist who is being richly paid for his attention and the ready humour of a man who is not tired at all. With Padre Duckworth of Kuala Lumpur, he is the most inspiring man I have ever met.

TARSAO—PROBABLY THE FOULEST of all the staging camps—had a river and, to get rid of the mud of the march and the sweat of our exertions, we made our way down to it. On its banks Thais did a brisk trade buying the clothes men stripped off to go swimming. Already starvation had become sufficiently real to make food infinitely more important than clothing.

We dived into the brown water and, sighting Hugh in midstream, I swam over to him. Revived by the water he looked surprisingly fit.

"How are you doing?" I asked.

"Fine," he replied.

"Where's Harry?"

"Making coffee," he said, and we laughed. I took a mouthful of water, spat it at him in the friendliest manner possible and swam slowly back to my clothes (now receiving unhealthy attention from a nearby squatting Thai). Hugh followed me in, back-stroking leisurely. We sat on a rock to dry off. Hugh's emaciated legs and blistered feet I pretended not to notice; and about my own revolting extremities he tactfully said nothing.

Hugh dressed and picked up a four-gallon petrol can.

"What's that for?" I asked him.

"Water for Harry's coffee," he told me. "He's boiling a brew back at the camp." It was half a mile uphill back to the camp, so I said I'd give him a hand, and a few minutes later we set off together.

Halfway up the hill a rather harassed-looking lieutenant passed us and glanced at the water in the tin.

"Make sure you boil that before you drink it," he said. "That river's full of cholera." I remembered the mouthful of water I had spat at Hugh, the mouthful practically every man in the party had spat at someone or other in their pleasure at having sufficient liquid available to be able to afford the extravagance of spitting it. Hugh and I finished our journey back in silence.

Because this was to be the last night of the march, and an

especially long leg, the guards were more than ever noisy and violent. Apart from mud, darkness, the sounds of the guards' voices screaming and the occasional bashings, the march had little that can adequately be described. Altogether it was a miserable affair. But if the jungle lay heavily round us, shrouded in murky gloom and a faint, all-pervading stink of leaf mould, fungus and stagnant water, the character of the marchers themselves—from Kevin Fagan downwards—shone out brilliantly through all their dark progress.

In a hundred ways the carefulness of those men for one another and their willingness to lend a hand to whomever needed it impressed one. They plodded stolidly on, punctuating their muddy plunging with remarks like: "Stump on the left . . ." "Are you all right, mate?" . . . and occasional oaths of such richness and vigour that one found oneself laughing.

But it was in the watery light of that next dawn that all laughter was killed for good in Thailand. A handful of grey men working on a Japanese truck turned out to be members of the force which had preceded us. They were emaciated, seemed indifferent to everything, and their faces were stamped with a misery that was too awful to look at. Their eyes, inches deep in the sockets, looked mad. Their force, they told us, had been obliterated by cholera. We marched another five or six miles in a despairing silence heightened by drenching rain. These were the first fruits we had seen of Nippon's promises of convalescent camps—skeletons with purplish skins, teeth that looked huge in shrunken faces, and haunted eyes.

Within three weeks we were all to be reduced to the same travesties of men.

WITH ONLY THREE KILOMETRES TO GO—the Japanese measured all distances by the metric system—we halted for a short rest. We halted in a sudden bare patch of swampy ground at the foot of a mountain we had just crossed. It was a mere saucer of treeless mud in the middle of the high-flanking, jungle-covered mountains. At its far end a track ran out of it into the mountains and to a place known to us as Kanu II. Kanu II was our destination, according to Terai.

We were not closely guarded. In fact, we were hardly guarded at all. It was not necessary—there was nowhere to go. The countryside for hundreds of miles around was uninhabited jungle, fever-ridden, devoid of food. To flee from any of our stopping places, or even from the march itself, was simply to die alone in the jungle.

We sat in the mud, amidst the sick and dying and an

agglomeration of dioxies, axes and kitbags, and looked up that track. How much better, or worse, than all this would Kanu II be?

Terai moved sympathetically among us and spoke for a few moments to the officer in charge. That worthy then detailed a dozen of us to stay in this saucer of mud and, on its tree-flanked border, to cut out a headquarters for our Japanese guards and the Japanese administrative officers.

Objecting violently to being separated from our friends, we collected our kit and fell out from the main party. I said goodbye to Hugh and Harry and a dozen or so more. Then they all marched away up the track and into the mountain. It was the last time we who remained were ever to see most of them. But there was no time for reflection. A short, stocky guard, by name Kanemoto, came bellowing over and within thirty seconds—though we had just marched twenty miles—we were working, hacking down trees and bamboo from the jungle.

Our labours in Thailand had begun.

KANEMOTO PROVED TO BE an unpleasant little man. In that first fortnight all twelve of us succumbed to malaria—a fact which maddened him. He kept saying that he did not get malaria, so why should we? By way of answer, we pointed to his protective clothing and our own G-strings, to his mosquito-netted bed and our little nests in the mud, to his bottles of quinine and atabrine—of which we had none. He did not accept this at all graciously and kept us working until one either collapsed or one's temperature reached 104° by his thermometer, whichever came first.

In that time, however, we also cleared a patch of jungle to a depth of about fifty yards and along a front of almost a hundred. Having made a clearing, we were then sent into the jungle to collect bamboo. This grew in huge vine-entangled clumps of anything up to forty lengths of bamboo, each length anything up to fifty feet in height. Cutting it was a task made unpleasant by its protective carpet of needle-pointed spikes.

Having collected sufficient lengths we were then required to erect the scaffolding of a hut—uprights, floor supports and roof supports—and then to lay broad leaves on the roof and slats of split bamboo on the floor and walls. It was a primitive, but effective, method of construction.

No sooner was the hut completed than a Japanese surveyor arrived and demanded workers for a special task. Almost disap-



Cholera: sick men, and bodies waiting to be burned.

pointed, Kanemoto surrendered us to him. We were to go and live in the centre of the small saucer of swamp that lay a quarter of a mile away. We were to work there collecting fuel and water for the Japanese reinforcements marching through Thailand up to Burma; we were to bury the natives who died so regularly all round this particular area; and in our spare time we were to work on the cuttings and embankments of the railway line that would run from Tarsao to Kanu.

As we marched out behind our new guard, Terai said: "I am sorry," and glanced downwards, whilst Kanemoto, endearing to the last, mocked at us: "*Di-sana taxan malaria. Ashita mah mah.*" "Down there is much malaria—tomorrow you will be dead."

OUR NEW ABODE WAS NOT SAVOURY. It consisted of the weather-battered fly of a tent, beneath which was a rough flooring of split bamboo raised a few inches off the mud by more bamboo logs laid flat. It was neither rain-proof nor wind-proof and it hummed with mosquitoes—those mosquitoes whose parasite-laden bite had kept the interior of Thailand uninhabited for thousands of years.

Between our tent and the jungle on the right lay two huts in which lived the Japanese. To our left a small stream wound sluggishly across the mud. In this stream the Indians from the camp just up the track were accustomed to wash, drink and excrete—a triple-practice from which nothing could dissuade them.

In consequence of it there were always two or three of them lying on the side of the track in their death throes. And when they died, Nippon ordered us to bury them just across the stream from our tent. So we carried these graceless corpses and interred them. And when it rained the covering soil washed off them and arms and legs contorted and stiffened in death before we had found them—pointed skywards out of the black mud. Pointed until they decomposed or the vultures ate them.

Against this background of guards on the one side, exposed corpses on the other, and the railway approaching from Tarsao behind, time ceased once again to have any significance. For almost a year no man knew what day of the week nor what week of the month nor even what month of the year it was. All we knew was 1943 and the railway. If one were to survive it was essential not to acknowledge the horror that lay all around, still more not to perceive the effect it had upon oneself. Life evolved into a blur of people dying, guards bellowing, heavy loads to be carried, fever which came in tides of

heat and cold on alternate days, dysentery and hunger. All those became the normal.

There was little scope for planning one's own way of life. To preserve my health, I vowed to wash whenever it rained. To preserve some dignity, I vowed I would shave at least once a week if only I could remember the days. And to preserve at least some mental agility, I determined to learn off by heart one page a day of Mr. Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. As the days succeeded one another for the rest of that black year, this particular vow became increasingly difficult, but I managed never to yield to the temptation of excusing myself from my task—and in return derived a perverse pleasure from the daily assimilation of so much vile prose.

TERAI ARRIVED ONE MORNING from the headquarters camp. He said that he had bad news. Harry Peck was dying. He was sorry.

I thanked him for letting me know. He shrugged and asked was there anything I wanted. I said: "Yes, quinine," to which he replied apologetically that quinine was difficult, and with that he left.

WE WENT TO WORK IN A CUTTING High above, at the cutting's top, stood the guards throwing boulders at the men who slaved below. In the cutting men worked in pairs. One holding a rock drill, the other hitting it with a sixteen-pound sledgehammer. All day long one swung the hammer, the other twisted the drill. Hit, twist, hit. All day long in turns, and at night some more by the light of bamboo and resin flares—and a thrashing for any pair who stopped.

When the holes had been drilled deep enough gelignite was inserted and the area blasted. The shattered rock was then carted in baskets, or manhandled in skips, to a cliff and there thrown over.

An English lad collapsed on the edge of this cliff and fell far down onto the jagged pile of broken rock at its foot. The guard peered over. "More one skip," he ordered. No one moved. With an impatient heave he dragged the lever of the skip himself and a ton of rubble crashed down on the body below.

The deaths of my friends, the ugly diseases that beset us, the constant reduction of rations that already seemed impossibly small, the bestiality of the guards—against all these things, whenever they seemed likely to impinge upon my mind, I flung up a conscious barrier: "It doesn't matter—nothing matters." It was a kind of narcotic, a self-induced drug, and no doubt—like all drugs and narcotics taken habitually—damaging. The fact remains that

starting while I was in Thailand, and continuing on right through my captivity, and stopping I'm not sure where, I withdrew into the ostrich-like burrow where "nothing mattered", and there, mentally secure, I remained.

TERAI VISITED US AGAIN. He was sorry, he said, but Hugh Moore had cholera, Harry Peck was still dying. I thanked him for his news and he said he had brought me something to help. "Quinine?" I asked hopefully; but he replied, "No, quinine was difficult," and gave me his present. When he had left I looked at it. A small, expensively produced book called *The Japanese Art of Arranging Flowers*.

FIRES FLARED AT EVERY CAMP where cholera struck. They lighted the way out to work in the dark before dawn; they guided the men back through the dark wetness of the jungle long after dusk. And always, lying round them in stick-like bundles, were the bodies that awaited cremation—bodies at which the returning men peered closely as they came in to see if any of their mates lay among them.

The oldest member of our party died. Another fell ill and followed him shortly afterwards. We were now six and I found that my limbs no longer functioned very well.

I knew that I had beriberi. There was an angry swelling in my feet which made them look like purple balloons—the toes mere cocktail sausages attached to them. My legs ceased walking either easily or quickly and whenever any weight was put on my back they folded up. Since Nippon's only object in bringing us all to Thailand had been to put weights on our backs and then get us to carry them elsewhere, this condition did not bode well for the future.

And, in truth, things would have gone very badly indeed for me had it not been for the generous help of the men with me. At all times they covered up for me so that the guards did not realize how slowly I worked. And when they had finished their own quota of work then they would do mine too.

In this respect one Snowy Bernard did most. He was unfortunate enough to have paired up with me when we first started work. Now that my arms seemed to have no strength with an axe he would chop down his own timber, then mine. When my legs crumpled under the weight of carrying the timber back to camp, he would deliver his own, then come back and deliver mine. And never was there any suggestion of condescension but only an inexhaustible readiness to lend a hand whenever it was needed.

And all the time that Snowy and the others carried me so steadfastly, I became more and more of a burden. The swelling spread up my legs so that ankles and knees vanished into two water-filled columns of suet. Then my trunk began to swell with that same ominous suggestion of liquid beneath the skin tissues and even my eyes became merely two slits in a puffy sphere.

The guards began to take an interest in my condition and daily showed their surprise that I was still alive. "*Ashita mati mati*," they would say, pointing towards the crop of arms and legs that protruded from the washed-out graves beyond our tent. If I had required any stimulant to prevent me from succumbing to the disease that so bloated me, those daily jibes by the guards would have done the job perfectly.

Nevertheless the morning at last arrived when I found that not only could I not walk as fast as the others, I could not walk at all. I decided that I must see an MO. Accordingly that night I left the tent on my hands and knees, eluded the guards, and crawled towards the headquarters camp. As I covered that quarter of a mile I found myself completely at a loss to understand why babies should spend the first twelve months of their lives propelling themselves in quite such an exhausting manner. My musings on this subject were interrupted by the MO himself, who spotted me ploughing—infant-like—through the mire and wanted to know what the hell I thought I was doing.

I replied that I thought I was coming to see him. He parried this with a question as to whence I came. When I told him, he pointed out that since that was a cholera-ridden area, I was extremely unwelcome and would I kindly stay where I was.

I said: "What, out here in the mud?" and he replied: "Yes," as if that were the most reasonable thing in the world. I was deeply aggrieved and said so. He, however, was adamant and eventually he persuaded me to remove my unwholesome presence altogether by throwing me a small jar. I looked at the label. "Marmite", it read.

"You have beriberi," he shouted.

"I know," I replied from the mud.

"Take a spoonful of that a day," he advised.

"Will it do any good?" I asked.

"Might," he replied and, returning firmly inside the palisade of the camp, indicated that the subject was closed. I crawled back to our camp, where I found the guards very cross that I had eluded them. I took a spoonful of Marmite and, exhausted, fell asleep.

TERAI CALLED AGAIN and we had a strange conversation. He was sorry, he said, but many hundreds of my friends had died at Kanu. Too many to remember the names.

"Moore?" I asked.

"No," replied Terai, "not yet, nor Peck. But many hundreds of others. Arthur Farmer is one." I found it difficult to understand why he bothered with these condolences, but he interrupted my thoughts. "You have read the book?"

I remembered the expensive little volume on flower arrangement and quickly said yes, I had read it.

"You liked it?"

I said that it was quite interesting but impossible to reconcile with the atrocious mentality of the guards we had struck in Thailand.

"They are only coolies, you must understand," explained Terai, "I am sorry that they behave badly."

"They're privates," I pointed out, "you are an officer: you could stop them if you were really sorry."

"It is difficult," Terai explained.

"Like the quinine," I suggested, and he allowed anger to flicker for just a second in those intelligent eyes. Then he glanced down again and repeated: "It is difficult. I have brought you another book." Realizing that an awkward subject was thus being closed I said, "Thank you."

"By the way," he added, as he prepared to leave, "I am writing a play."

"In English or Nippon-go?" I asked.

"English," he said proudly. "You must read it when it is complete and give me your criticism." I promised that I would.

"*Sayonara*," he said, in farewell, and left—a slim, good-looking young man whom I didn't understand at all. I glanced at this last book he had given me. It was entitled *Bushido or Japanese Chivalry*.

BY THIS TIME THE FLUIDS of the wet beriberi which swamped me were flopping round in my chest, having crept up from my legs. I had become indifferent towards many modes of death, but drowning could never be one of them. The only preventative I could think of was to consume sufficient vitamin B tablets (they would have, of course, to be stolen from the Japanese) to overcome the deficiency which caused the beriberi.

A large force of Japanese reinforcements came sloshing up the jungle trail, shoving mountain artillery along with them. Though we

had just finished a particularly heavy shift we were routed out to light fires, boil water, cook food. An officer thrust his cape at me and indicated that I was to dry it.

Standing in front of the fire with the cape I found it impossible not to sway on my unstable legs. Soon the inevitable occurred—the cape caught alight. Before I extinguished the flame one large corner of the gentleman's garment had vanished.

The gentleman himself was not slow to notice. He leaped up, kicked, swiped with his bayonet and then, for good measure, shoved me firmly into the fire. Bloated as I was, I was slow to move. Snowy solved the problem by ignoring the officer's bellows and dragging me out. It was all over in seconds, but it did nothing to heighten in my mind my impression of *Bushido or Japanese Chivalry*.

Muttering to himself as Snowy brushed me free of embers, the officer took his charred cape and placed it resentfully over his other possessions. Following his actions with a wary eye, I noticed that from the top of his haversack there protruded a large bottle of vitamin B tablets.

When I left, so did the bottle. That night I sat up and ate solidly the small brown tablets. They did not make easy eating, but I was a man who for a hundred days had been mocked by the Japanese as a perambulating corpse, so I continued munching. By morning the bottle was empty. I did not require my small ration of rice.

About two days later I reaped the profits of my theft. We had just gone to our bed spaces when it suddenly became necessary to urinate. I crawled the thirty yards to our makeshift urinal and obliged, and started to crawl back to the tent. I had only gone halfway, however, when it became necessary to reverse. Eventually, I stayed there and every ten minutes or so for two days fluid poured out of me. My chest no longer looked puffy; my stomach lost its thick pregnant look; my knees reappeared, then my ankles and then my toes. The beriberi bloated pudding was gone. In its place stood a skeleton which had never in all its life been so pleased with its physical condition than at this moment, when, according to the Japanese quartermaster's scales, it weighed eighty-one pounds.

THE RAILWAY NOSED ITS WAY into our swamp and, along with it, came tents to house the batches of natives who, impressed in Malaya, were shipped daily up the line. Thousands upon thousands went up into the heart of Thailand and Burma. It is thought that 130,000 of them died.

Each night, therefore, we received about a thousand men, and each morning we buried the dead they left behind in the tents when they moved out. They were feckless, selfish and careless of anyone but themselves, those natives; but one could not help feeling sorry for them as they moved up in daily droves to be slaughtered.

One thing they did have, though, that we could well use—money. With their infinite capacity for commerce, they had all arrived in Thailand with thousands of dollars. Here, it seemed to me, was an opportunity to repay my companions for something at least of what they had done for me.

I sold my only pair of shorts to a Thai for \$3.75. Then, under dark of night, armed with the \$3.75, I eluded all guards and patrols and made my way to the next camp down the line where the Thais sold cigarettes. I bought \$3.75 worth and then returned to our own camp. I sold the \$3.75 worth of cigarettes to the natives for \$7, and next night repeated the operation. In a week we had \$37 in the kitty with which to barter for extra food. I felt a little less of a liability.

THE DEATH ROLL ALL THE WAY UP the line was at this time so appalling that even more violent representations than usual were made by the British officers commanding each party to the Japanese administration. The representations were received by Colonel Fukuda, upon whose goodwill we all depended for food and drugs.

"The Japanese," he said, "are prepared to work: you must be prepared to work. The Japanese are prepared to eat less to save the strain on a difficult supply route: you must be prepared to eat less. The Japanese are prepared to die: you must be prepared to die."

When, to this specious argument, the British officer replied that that was all very well, but in actual fact the Japanese did not work, ate as much as ever, and—by virtue of regular doses of vitamin B, quinine and anti-cholera serum—did *not* die, the honourable colonel merely shrugged his shoulders and replied: "There are plenty more prisoners of war."

That was his final answer.

THE DRIVE TO GET THE RAILWAY completed suddenly heightened. By day and by night parties of men, naked except for their G-strings and the canvas bandages round their ulcers, marched to the cuttings and the embankments and the bridgeworks. Their eyes glowed deeply within gaunt faces and the skin over their thigh bones—thigh bones



Fit prisoners parade for work on the railway.

which protruded like axeheads—was worn through in great red patches of flesh where they slept on their sides

Terai came down to give me a list of thirty names of men who had died within the last few days. He was, he said, very sorry.

"There are so many," he said softly. There were indeed. With relief I noticed that both Hugh and Harry were still alive. "They must be putting up a good fight for it," I said, almost to myself.

"Who?" asked Terai.

"Moore and Peck," I told him.

"They are very lucky," Terai declared; then, clicking his sword up and down in its scabbard as he stood before me—I sat on the bamboo floor of the tent killing lice—he said: "Well, I have some good news for you at last." I wondered what it could be. The emperor of Japan dead or Colonel Fukuda boiled in oil or an extra ounce of rice a day on our ration—I looked questioningly up at him. Banging his sword with an air of finality back into its scabbard, he announced: "Italy is out of the war."

This was a great disappointment to me. I—in fact, everyone in Thailand—had known for two days, via our illicit radios and the grapevine, that Italy was out of the war. It would not, however, be wise to say so. So I just said: "Is it? That's good to hear."

But Terai was no fool. "You are not surprised, Mr. Braddon," he observed.

I realized I had made a mistake. I must retrieve it. "No, I'm not," I said. "They're lousy soldiers."

"But Italy has not just lost a battle," Terai pointed out, "she is out of the war." He paused. "And you were not surprised. You must have known. How did you know, Mr. Braddon?"

This was nasty, but I stuck to my guns. I did not know. I was not surprised. They were lousy soldiers.

Terai repeated that, if I was not surprised, I must have known. Where had I heard it? Who had a radio? Perhaps I had better return to headquarters till the matter was cleared up.

Terai and I walked amicably along the freshly-laid track of the railway to the headquarters camp, and for several days thereafter Terai and a friend of his from the Kempe-Tai (Japanese Gestapo) questioned me gently but firmly about how I must have known about Italy's surrender not to be surprised at the news: and I, in my turn, gave them the line that the Italians, as soldiers, were so lousy that no one possibly *could* be surprised.

Meantime, a swift surprise search had been conducted for radios in

all camps up the line, and several suspects had been arrested. Then the uproar subsided and my own case—to my vast relief—was dropped. Terai was most agreeable. But I no longer felt at all confident of Terai.

The days succeeded one another and the railway nosed its way well past the headquarters camp and into the mountain that led to Kanu. The atrocious project was nearing its completion.

HALF A DOZEN OF US were sent up just beyond Kanu to lay some lines. We worked until the required section was completed. Then only did we lie down to sleep.

We had not been asleep long, lying on the track itself, when someone shook me into wakefulness. "What's that?" he asked: and at the same moment I heard a demented, high-pitched screaming.

"Baboons," I reassured him. "Horrible ruddy noise, isn't it?"

"That's no baboon, mate," he argued, "I heard plenty of baboons, and I seen 'em. And that ain't no baboon." We listened again, and again the shrill shriek cut through the jungle darkness.

"Christ, that's horrible," said the other. "C'mon, mate. That's no baboon, that's a man."

Though I didn't want to go with him and find what caused a man to make a noise like that I lacked the courage to say so. We stole down the line, covered a quarter of a mile and the sound now came from our right. We cut into the jungle, our progress noisy and difficult, and almost immediately we found the source of that demented voice. The wreckage of a man, mere bones, skin and hair, stood clutching a tree, his mouth wide open, screaming, mad, inhuman.

Two figures suddenly appeared beside him and carried him away. The screaming continued. My companion and I followed them until they placed him on the ground in a small hut with four or five others.

"One of your blokes?" I asked.

"Yes, chum," said the Pommy, an RAMC orderly.

"What's the matter with him?" demanded my companion.

"Cerebral malaria," the Pommy told us.

"How old was that bloke?" I asked.

"Twenty-two. He's not dead yet, you know." We started to move off. "He will be soon, though," he added. "What we need is quinine."

But quinine, I knew, was difficult. Wearily we two Australians threaded our way through the jungle, onto the rail track and back to

the little group of sleeping men. Slightly apart from them the guard lay on a groundsheet, his close-cropped skull pillowed on his haversack, snoring gently. My companion picked up a sledgehammer and looked thoughtfully at the black bristly skull.

"Forget it," I said, "it wouldn't make any difference anyway." Dropping the hammer, the other man nodded and brushed his hands together absent-mindedly, as if he'd just finished a job.

"You could be right, mate," he said, lowering himself onto the ground. "Happy dreams."

THE LINE WAS FINISHED. From Bangkok to Rangoon it ran uninterrupted—except that the Royal Air Force blew up the odd vital bridge at strategic intervals so that no train ever got through. But, for the moment, it was completed and the Japanese decided to open it with ceremony.

At this ceremony the senior British officer on the line was invited to speak. He refused abruptly, saying that neither he nor any prisoner of war wished in any way to celebrate the official opening of a railway line whose every sleeper on its whole four-hundred-mile length had cost one human life. The Japanese were in no way put out.

Chapter Eight

The IJA were now confronted with the problem of what to do with the survivors of their railway. These did not look like men; on the other hand, they were not quite animals. The first thing the Japanese did, therefore, was to collect most of us at Kamburi—that same Kamburi which had been the last town before the jungle commenced on our march up. We were loaded onto trains and shipped down. There were several longish stops on the way to allow those who died to be buried.

Finally we steamed into the flat fields of Kamburi, and staggered off the train, cramped and ravenous, for we had had no food for two days.

We moved into huts. They had a raised platform on each side of a centre aisle—as our numbers increased so the amount of this platform available to one became steadily less. It was mathematical. Eventually we had nineteen inches a man and a line of men crosswise at our feet. Nineteen inches is not enough for a man. To this the

Japanese pointed out that, since many died, soon there would be more room. In this, it seemed, there was great truth, because a day did not seem to pass when twenty men were not buried.

Indeed each day commenced with the collection of the dead, who were taken outside the camp and across the road to be buried. After that the day was one's own, for there was no work to do. If one could walk, one went looking for friends, if not one lay hoping that some friends would come along instead.

Hugh and Harry I found quite early in my stay at Kamburi—Hugh obviously on the mend, though fearfully torn by the fires of cholera; Harry, equally obviously, doomed. Hugh and I spent quite a lot of time with him, but his bowels kept failing him, and we were never sure that our presence wasn't more of an embarrassment than anything else.

Finally, however, he sent for us. Hugh was on a hut-sweeping fatigue, so I went down to the dysentery hut where Harry lay. In the callous—necessarily callous—fashion of those days, he had been laid on the floor because he was constantly fouling himself and on the floor it didn't matter. When two hundred men evacuate about forty times a day each and there are only two orderlies with half a dozen crude bedpans to cope with that day's 8,000 calls, it can readily be seen that no care could be wasted on a man who was dying. So Harry lay on the floor, a wizened-up little heap of rag with two claw-like hands and a tuft of dirty hair on his head.

I knelt beside him. "How are you doing, Harry?" I asked.

"Won't be long now, Dig," he replied weakly, but steadily.

"Don't come that on me," I argued, "you've got too much to do back home."

"No, lad, no," he said, "I'm on the floor. I know what that is. I'm finished. Like you say, Russ, it doesn't matter. So long as I'm not alone, I don't care."

I tried to rouse him. "Sell you a cup of coffee for a dollar," I said. He knew what I was up to. He turned his grotesque head with its tuft of dirty hair and grinned. For a fraction of a second the eyes were Harry's again as he grabbed my hand in his two claws. Then they dimmed again, blueish glazed like a newborn pup's.

"Just so long as I'm not alone, I don't care any longer," Harry said.

"You're all right, Pommy," I told him, "you won't be alone."

I needn't have worried, though. Harry had already gone where all good shopkeepers go.

KAMBURI TURNED OUT TO BE a hotbed of MT malaria — MT stands for malignant tertian and wreaks fearful havoc among sick men who are not safeguarded with nets and quinine. The death toll, which had been slackening slightly, speeded up again under the stimulus of MT malaria.

As was inevitable my turn came and I found myself too weary with fever to move, or eat. Hugh was a tower of strength. He collected cupfuls of water and washed me. He fed me my rice until I was sick. He did everything possible until I got so hot that I no longer knew whether anything was being done for me or not. Instead I thought I read a book. A book I had written myself, full of sonorous phrases and magnificent sentences. It was a most excellent book, except that it made no sense, and when I reached out my hand to turn over the page it was not there.

When that happened I would return to reality—but only for a second. Then I was off again, reading. A hundred times I reached out to turn pages. And a hundred times I awoke with a jerk to the truth of Kamburi. But the book always won—until one night I was very hot and my mother came to put cool cloths on my head. I knew she should not be there, but when I argued, she just laughed and took my wrist and called gently and my sister also appeared—my mother and sister sitting quite still facing me, dry-eyed, and the dog jumping up and down asking for its ball to be thrown.

The grip on my wrist tightened. "It's MT," I heard a voice say, "he's not too good. Give him some of that atabrine or we'll have another cerebral case on our hands," and another voice said: "Pulse is fast," and the grip on my wrist vanished.

Cerebral malaria. The noise like baboons, only it was men. That dispelled all my dreams. From that moment I ate everything and eagerly awaited my half-tablet of the precious atabrine a day and went to sleep only grudgingly lest my control of consciousness should slip again. I did not want to shout like a baboon.

A few days later it was all finished.

"You're a bright one," said Hugh with a grin. "Silly as a two-bob watch, you were."

ULCERS WERE A SERIOUS PROBLEM. They were attacked at once. Whilst Kevin Fagan operated all day on a bamboo table in a small cubicle kept free of flies by mosquito nets (he cleaned out or amputated as many as forty legs a day, and always there was that gentle smile and the specialist's considerate manner), orderlies and

volunteers, armed with common-or-garden spoons, which were sterilized in boiling water, cleaned out every ulcer in the camp at least once a day. The heroism of those men whose legs were so scooped was incredible. It was not as if once done it was finished. There was invariably the next day.

I cannot adequately describe the courage of those men because, having only suffered a few small ulcers myself, I shall never know the pain they bore so stoically. Let me hasten to state, however, that although I clung firmly to a bamboo upright for support I never once had the small craters round my ankle bones scooped clean with that fearsome spoon without either being sick or fainting, or both. And had it not been for shame at the silence of those others, with the flesh from the knee to the ankle laid bare, and their rigid straining backwards, I should have screamed with terror and with pain.

THE DYSENTERY HUTS and the beriberi ward grew steadily more and more crowded, and volunteers were requested for duties as medical orderlies. The only knowledge necessary was how to empty a bedpan or "boat". I handed in my name. I thus entered the strange world of people who stay awake at night and watch while others sleep and die.

It was a little eerie, that night duty, with only a small coconut-oil wick for light in a fifty-metre hut. It was also touching. The gratitude of men for a drag upwards as they tried to rise, or a restraining arm as they fell back too quickly. The supreme pathos of two hundred dying men who, relaxed and unselfconscious in their sleep, looked like children.

For a while it worried me that some of those who died should do so asleep and without warning—they seemed so unprepared. But then when I saw those who knew what was happening and lay patiently *waiting* to die for hours, with only their own courage and humour to bear them over those last minutes—then I ceased to worry about those who died in their sleep.

I learned to undress the dead, tidy up their belongings, straighten their legs, fold their hands across their chests, close their eyes. If the lids were reluctant to shut, a little cold water on a piece of cloth and, after a few seconds, the eyes were closed and peaceful. All this and much else I learned. Most important of all I learned to sit with any man who couldn't sleep and, while I waited for the next hoarse urgent whisper of "Orderly . . . boat, please," to talk with him about those sudden thoughts that come at night to men who are far

from home. Voices low-pitched, sporadic phrases and long, companionable silences. It was some comfort that the war had at least taught me to like my fellow men and that, for all of us, there was more than a little to be said.

ROSIE—THE BOMBARDIER-SOLICITOR of the slide rule, the seasick pills and the cutthroat razor—Rosie died. All the threads with the past seemed to be snapping. There was, of course, no future. No one with any intelligence allowed himself in those days to contemplate the future.

IN KAMBURI WATER WAS ALWAYS the difficulty. When it rained everyone crawled out and stood or lay under the pouring eaves of the huts and scrubbed themselves clean. But when it didn't rain, then even to get enough water to drink was a problem.

It was in this matter that a small group of officers started and carried out (always more difficult) a most generous scheme. They collected a basin and a kerosene tin. They would fill the basin with clean, clear water collected from the well some distance outside the camp. Then they would send one of their number up to one of the huts and he would select someone to whom he would say: "There's a tub of water for you down at our hut if you want it," and that was all. When you went down to the hut, the basin stood outside with a small piece of soap. No one there. No questions asked. It was restoring, that free bath, after days of sweating with fever and parching heat.

Nor did the group stop there. With their limited officers' allowance, they made gifts of fruit, eggs and money—usually when one slept, so that one awoke to find it there beside one. They dropped into each hut almost every day, each one of them, to yarn and see how things went. They pestered the hard-pressed medical staff if they saw a case that needed attention.

Not only these officers, however, understood the value of water. My duties as a night orderly were abruptly terminated by a second attack of MT malaria, and at that time Kamburi had had a rainless week. Water was at a premium. I needed gallons of it.

One day I became aware of the soft clang of a mug against tin, then the splashing of water. I turned my head and looked: there, in the aisle, stood an Australian—Snowy, we called him. In his right hand he held a four-gallon can of water, in his left a mug, which he constantly filled and poured slowly back into the can, filled and poured back.

"Want a drink, mate?" he asked. I explained to him that if I had to choose between a bagful of diamonds and a drink of water at that stage, I'd take the drink. He grinned understandingly.

"Give us your mug then," he said. I struggled upright and found my mug in amongst *Mein Kampf* and all the other junk. He dipped his own mug into the water and held it over mine, ready to pour. Then: "Got ten cents on you, mate?" Snowy suddenly asked.

"Got what?" I asked, my mind still on the water.

"Ten cents," said Snowy. "It's ten cents a mug, you know." He looked at me shrewdly, his eyes hard as I rebelled at the thought. "Take it or leave it, mate," he said. "Ten cents ain't much and a man's gotta live."

"I haven't got ten cents," I told him, which was true, "so shove off." I lay back again and tried to think about lemons.

"You could give me an IOU, mate," the flat nasal voice urged. "I got one here. All you gotta do is sign." He thrust onto my chest a grubby form and a pencil. I read the form:

"I the undersigned hereby promise to pay on demand the sum of ten cents or upon return to Australia £1 (one pound)."

One pound for a mug of water!

"Snowy," I told him, "you're a good businessman," and signed. He replied: "Thanks, mate." He took his pencil and IOU and passed me my mug. I drank deeply and felt better.

Altogether, during that rainless period and my high fever, Snowy managed to sell me one hundred and twelve pounds worth of water.

When, two years later, I got back to Australia, one of the first letters I received was a demand for one hundred and twelve pounds. I wrote Snowy a polite note saying that I should be enchanted to pay him, so long as he would meet me in Sydney where we might both be photographed by the press—I giving him a cheque for one hundred and twelve pounds, he handing me a receipt—money paid for water received. I thought that as a tale of comradeship in arms, it would read well in the dailies.

Surprisingly, I received no answer.

I HAD JUST RECOVERED FROM this latest bout of fever when into the hut strode Terai. "Hello, Mr. Braddon," he said. "I am glad to see you again. But you are still so yellow and thin."

"Still got malaria," I told him.

"*Ah so-ka*," he agreed, "I am sorry." Then, more cheerfully, "I have finished my play."

"Good stuff," I told him. "Got it there?"

"Yes," he said, digging into his tunic and dragging out a roll of typescript, "here it is. You will read it and tell me your criticism." I nodded: "I will return tomorrow," he said and, with a smile, left.

Slowly I unrolled the neat typescript. Strange bloke, this Terai. Pro-British, some said. Got violin strings which were scarce as all hell for the concert party; but couldn't ever get quinine, of which there was tons, for the railway workers. Went to a lot of trouble to keep you informed about your friends in other camps; then spent days trying to trick you into admitting that you got news from an illicit radio. A professor of English classics who pressed on you booklets about Bushido and the art of arranging flowers.

I skipped the title page and the cast list, my eye flying direct to the introduction. It observed that British, American and Dutch prisoners of war had worked with Nippon on the glorious project of the Thailand Railway. By completing it, they had both atoned for the accumulated sins of their forefathers in the east and had imbibed sufficient culture from their guards to raise themselves onto an altogether higher spiritual plane.

I grunted at that. Either this Terai was the most superb satirist of Japanese propaganda or he was the most fanatical purveyor of it. I started on the play itself.

An hour later, with difficulty, I finished it. The dialogue was hopeless; the English poor; the plot fatuous. It concerned Allied POWs who, after working with a noble Japanese guard on the railway, became convinced that the Japanese way of life was quite the best and the British way of life quite the worst.

Mr. Terai arrived next day and I was no longer in any doubt about him—even though he looked so gentle and innocuous.

"You have read my play, Mr. Braddon?" he asked. I nodded. "And . . .?" he queried.

"Lousy," I told him.

"Lousy, Mr. Braddon?" His face was questioning, although a glimmer of angry understanding lurked in his eyes.

"Yes, Mr. Terai. Lousy! *Warui, tidak bagus*, Number Ten." I elucidated in all the other languages that he was likely to understand. I held out the rolled typescript and, with carefully suppressed fury, he took it. "Nothing personal, of course, Mr. Terai," I added, sweetly.

"Of course not, Mr. Braddon. I am most interested in your views," he said, "most interested," and left.

I didn't see Terai ever again; but when the war ended with Japan's unconditional surrender, he was, I am told, one of the few who obeyed the Nipponese injunction never to be captured alive. He committed hara-kiri.

AND THEN, SUDDENLY, the Japanese said: "All men go to Singapore," and we got in trains and left mosquito-infested Kamburi. Not even the vile five days that followed in that train could dampen our pleasure because now at last we were going away and nothing could ever, after Thailand, be bad again.

Chapter Nine

From Singapore station we were transported in trucks, trucks noticeably the worse for wear in the last year, to Sime Road—where once there had been a golf course and now there was a camp.

At Sime Road we stayed for several months, recuperating and licking our wounds. Nothing much happened at Sime Road. General Saito, who commanded us, ordered that all men should be able to count up to one hundred in Japanese and that all orders on parade should be in the same barbaric language. Whenever he or his aide, Lieutenant Takahashi, appeared, we were all to shout "*Kurai*" (meaning officer) and stand up to attention and salute.

Saito and Takahashi frequently did the rounds of the camp to enforce this rule. They and Saito's pet monkey on a leash became quite familiar sights to us though, of the three, the only one we liked was the monkey.

Then one day the monkey on its leash leaped round the corner of a hut and the first occupant who spotted it shouted, "*Kurai*," realizing that Saito and Takahashi would be close behind. But, as the whole hut stood up and saluted, Saito and Takahashi were not close behind. They were, in fact standing on the crest of a hill a hundred yards away. And what they saw was block after block of prisoners of war screaming "*Kurai*" and saluting a monkey. The implication was unmistakable. That night Saito chopped his pet monkey's head off and next morning Takahashi issued an order that any other pet monkeys in the camp were to be destroyed.

The next event of significance was the collapse of Kevin Fagan. Exhausted by fever and a year's superhuman effort on behalf of others, the slim, greying MO suddenly folded up. To the room where

he lay, from all over the camp, came an endless pilgrimage of soldiers bearing tinned food, money, oil, soap, clothes, all their most cherished possessions. "Brought this for the major," they would say, "thought it might help," and then wander off. No other man in the entire Malayan force could have won so spontaneous a tribute of such treasures.

For days his progress was followed with even closer attention than the BBC news. When it was announced on parade that he was off the danger list, the ranks of men rumbled with pleasure. When he was first seen up and walking again, the camp gazed proudly upon him as a hospital does upon its star patient. In the light of the total and inexplicable absence of official recognition, since the war ended, of his devotion to his men, it is pleasant to recollect that at Sime Road, when he fell ill, we were at least able to pay a small part of the tribute so long owed him.

The final event of importance at Sime Road was mail from home. It had come through the Red Cross and was sixteen months old. But it was from home. Hugh and I both received our first letters. Mine came from my sister. It said:

"Dear Russ,

Mum's puddings are still as lumpy as ever. Oodles of love from us all.

Pat."

I read it over and over. That letter told me all I wanted to know—that the family did not accept that I was "killed", as posted; that the old household jokes about my mother's cooking still flourished; that home was still home.

A lean figure drooped disconsolately against a post opposite me.

"No mail, Dig?" I asked.

"Nope."

"Like to read this?" I offered, as casually as possible because I knew the hurt that came when you missed out on the Red Cross mail.

"Don't mind if I do," he said cautiously, so I passed him the card and, as he accepted it, he said: "Ta."

He looked at the address, at the Japanese frank, at the colour of the ink. Then, very carefully, he read it. And then again. After about ten minutes he handed it back.

"'Oodles of love'," he said, "that's nice. That's a nice letter." A pause for thought and then: "Pat's your sister, is she?" I nodded.

"What's your mother like?" he asked. I said tall and good fun, but a lousy cook.

"Thought from that she might be," he laughed. "My old woman is too. Trouble is, she don't know it like yours." For a few moments there was silence, then he said: "I'll get one one day, mate, don't you worry. I had a baby coming just when Singapore chucked it in. Got to find out whether it's a boy or a girl."

"Fussy?" I asked.

"Aw," he said, "I reckon I like me teapots with a spout on 'em." He stood up straight from the post and strolled off. After a few yards he turned and shouted back: "Thanks, mate, do the same for you some time."

Soon after that we were informed that all POWs on Singapore were to be concentrated inside Changi Gaol. Once again we prepared to move. At least, we felt, we would meet a lot of friends.

WHEN SEVEN THOUSAND OF US marched into Changi Gaol, which had been designed to hold six hundred, we found that the sewage facilities had broken down and the oil burners that supplied the steam kitchen no longer worked because there was no oil.

With no help from the Japanese, we transformed the gaol in a few days. The oil-burning boilers were, by some sapper's miracle, translated into wood-burning boilers and a wood-cutting party grubbed stumps out of the nearby swamps, split their iron roots into lumps and had fuel ready for the burning. Thereafter, with a good head of steam up, the rice for the entire prison was pressure-cooked in a matter of seconds

At the same time augurs were flung to work—a steel tripod twenty feet high, from the apex of which hung a shaft whose nose was a sort of triple shovel. Through the shaft ran a bar and on each end of the bar three men pushed ... round and round ... until that triple-shovel at the end of the shaft was full of clay. Then haul it out, empty it, and start again. Working in shifts, the holes sank, one after the other, in every gaol courtyard, forty feet deep. Those were our latrines—and, used in rotation, they never failed in their purpose.

And while hundreds of squads of six men in shifts kept the augurs turning, whilst others carted away the raw-red clay that the augurs churned, and whilst the woodcutters lugged logs into the cookhouse courtyard for the Royal Engineers' boiler—while all this went on, others constructed huts. Rubber trees were chopped down for uprights and bamboos for roof supports, and barbed wire was

straightened for bindings and its long spikes were shaped into nails. Then palm fronds were cut to make rain-proof roofs and walls. So every man found shelter. And, with the boreholes functioning so perfectly, no dysentery epidemic broke out.

But efforts had not finished yet—not by a long chalk. Parties that went out to work stole lengths of inch-piping and, with it, showers were installed in each courtyard. And the Engineers made the taps at the washbasins work, by some weird magic known only to Engineers. And, by stripping the hard spine out of the leaf of the palm frond and binding bunches of these spines together, birch brooms were made. Shorter lengths were stuck, with pitch torn off the roads, in evenly clipped tufts, into a wooden head—and hard brooms were the result. Likewise were nailbrushes for the medical staff made; and, with the softer fibre from the outside of coconuts, soft brooms and toothbrushes. And with palm oil and some potash from the boilers, and a complex machine made of empty drums and stolen pipes, soap was made.

And with the latex that came out of the rubber trees, some planters soled boots and shoes. They coagulated the latex—crudely but effectively—by urinating in it. A little sand added to the hardening fluid, and there was a tough sole for a shoe. With the same material, they devised a means of patching clothes—cotton having vanished from our lives—and of preparing an adhesive tape for medical dressings. And with the soft white wood of young rubber trees those who had no boots fashioned themselves clogs. Also, there was a workshop where filing cabinets and rubber trees were wrought into artificial limbs—beautiful pieces of work which their owners (the hundreds of amputees from Thailand and Burma) preferred after the war to the products given them by a grateful government at home.

And one man made a small engraving machine which could be used to inscribe “Rolex Waterproof” on the back and face of even





Changi Gaol, 1944.

the cheapest watch so that it became worth thousands of dollars on the black market.

Finally, within the earliest days of our occupation, gardens were planted. An area of rubber outside the gaol was sought from—and granted by—the now-bemused General Saito. It was cleared, terraced and planted. Wells were dug and pumps were made. Every day and all day men pumped water and tended the long rows of native sweet potatoes, tapioca, papaya, bayam. Every drop of urine

passed in the gaol was conserved and carted out to these gardens and mixed with the water from the pumps and poured on. The life-giving green leaves flourished. Two inches a day, they sprang up under our unflagging care. So the beriberi was kept at bay and vitamin-deficiency diseases were contained.

Such was the background of our own domestic arrangements in Changi Gaol. But, as they stand, they present a false picture. For *they* were only the second theme of our life. The main theme—dominating everything else—was The Aerodrome. For this, in the grey light of each dawn, every fit man marched out of the main gate, through a half-mile or so of bush to where a bite was being taken out of a hill. That bite was four thousand metres long and the white clay and stone face, along with the pulverized flat of the airstrip at its foot, stretching sideways to the sea, glared and glittered sullenly in the unending heat. The thousands of men who worked there day after day, all week and every week, were black with the sun and this mirrored glare.

So, while the men who could work slaved down on this aerodrome, those who couldn't stayed in gaol making brooms, growing gardens, grubbing wood and dragging it to the cookhouse, building, scrubbing and sweeping.

1944 saw our administrative officers do a magnificent job. Changi Gaol in that year was a triumph of improvisation and pulling together—even the men dying in the hospital huts sat with heaps of palm fronds and tore out spines for brushes, or plaited the leaves for screens.

For the thousandth time in my captivity, I felt pride in my fellow men.

WORK ON THE AERODROME continued with unabated fury, digging out the white, gritty face of that hill, shovelling it into skips, pushing the skips to the other side of the strip and emptying them onto its swampy fringe—gradually filling in and levelling. Fortunately, tedium was an old friend of ours now and we all had our various ways of dealing with it. Some, like Hugh, worked steadily without ever stopping, just a rhythmic shovel and throw, shovel and throw, for however long the shift lasted. My own recipe was the mental exercise of trying to recall to mind the second movement of Bruch's violin concerto and the proof of Pythagoras's theorem about the square on the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle.

The amount of work done by men who now weighed about eight

stone instead of their usual eleven or twelve (and who sank to as low as five or six) was remarkable. The heat had no effect on them. They worked without headwear, they wore only G-strings, they ate less each day than international pre-war scientists had declared to be the amount on which a man could continue to live, and yet they contrived to plug along for ten or twelve hours on end.

In one respect they did suffer more than ever. Skin diseases, never given a chance to dry up, became worse than ever before. Scrotums were raw, legs covered in sores—hundreds of them. The doctors had obtained a purple dye, a green dye, a red dye and acriflavine which was yellow. They painted these sores with all these dyes in turn and, though this had no effect at all on the sores, it was at least most colourful.

The doctor who treated me took a tireless interest in my legs—especially the three-year-old holes in my foot which still refused to heal—and tried everything. He scalded them clean with water in which he maintained he could insert his own elbow without discomfort, though I never saw him do it. He prepared a culture from the matter in my wounds and pumped it into me. He scraped them clean till they all bled each day. He bound them up and allowed them to stew under the same dressing for a week. It made not the smallest difference. Always there were hundreds of nagging sores and always they flourished.

I finished my self-imposed task with *Mein Kampf*, having committed to memory its last vitriolic page. Now I had to do something else to keep my mind off my revolting body. I flung about me for fresh fields of mental activity—there was plenty of scope.

There was knitting. Quite a lot of men now knitted—and with great agility, too. They stole army jumpers from the Japanese, unwound them into balls of wool and knitted them into socks which they then sold back to the Japanese for ten dollars a pair.

Or there was carving and engraving—the main material being perspex. The Japanese seemed not very expert at landing their planes on the new aerodrome and many hit the trees at the commencement of the four-thousand-metre runway. When they did, POWs were always quick to strip the wreckage of perspex from the windshields. I realized, however, that I had no talent for perspex-engraving, so that was out.

There were languages. In Changi every language, every language known to man, including Esperanto, was taught by someone. I thought I might easily learn a language—perhaps two. And there

was *Exile*—the gaol's monthly magazine. I thought I might write. I did and wished that I hadn't. Writing is always like that.

And finally the ex-accountant Sydney Piddington lured me into a nightly practising of some simple exercises in telepathy. And when Piddington and I eventually demonstrated these experiments publicly, some said that it was a hoax, but some said it was genuine, and quoted their own psychic experiences in the various cases of their old dead uncles and aunts and other relatives.

In the course of these demonstrations my reception of what Piddington transmitted was by no means infallibly successful. On one occasion we achieved the remarkable feat of getting nothing right—nothing at all—the audience being the most cursed group for whom we had ever worked. On another occasion a line from one of Shakespeare's plays was written up which I had to guess, reading: "And through the instrument his pate made way"; and no efforts of Sydney's would induce me to do more than announce, with a cackle of laughter, that a bald-headed old gentleman had been clocked with a violin.

And so it went on, sometimes right, sometimes wrong, but always causing fierce arguments which (the authorities seemed to think) was a good thing.

Certainly it was encouraging to see the response of the men in the hospital huts, many of whom were dying, amongst other things, of lack of the interest to live. After one of our shows two men—both due to die within a fortnight—were, for the first time in months, up off their backs on their feet endeavouring to fight.

HUGH'S AND MY CIRCLE OF FRIENDS eddied a little and swelled. We met Ronald Searle. Ron was young, dark-haired and blue-eyed and he listened keenly, but not with much air of being impressed, to everything that was said. He was an artist.

He had left England with the 18th Division and travelled halfway round the world so that at the last moment, when all was already lost, he and his comrades might be flung into our tropical campaign in their English winter uniforms. Ron's interest in things military seemed to have died on that day. His main interest thereafter lay in training himself to be an artist so that when the war ended he might make his mark in England. He therefore drew assiduously, and criticized his own work mercilessly, from the first day of captivity to the last.

He had fallen ill trying to build railways in Thailand and, when I saw him, was covered from head to foot in a foul creeping skin disease. As well his innards were torn with dysentery and his left hand—his drawing hand—holed with ulcers. But he would still draw—with his right hand. He ran the monthly magazine *Exile* in which his cartoons were a delight.

As well as that he designed and carried out all the sets for Changi's playhouse. This theatre, erected in one of the courtyards, put on shows which ranged from Coward to pantomime and which in quality and production could easily have taken their place in any of London's West End theatres. No man ever looked to the future with a more steadfast and determined eye than did Ron Searle with his wide blue ones. His post-war ranking as Britain's most popular cartoonist was no surprise to anyone who had lived with him in Changi.

SPICE AND AN ACADEMIC FLAVOUR were given to our conversations by the inclusion of three of the strongest-minded men in Changi—Alec Downer, David Griffin and Tony Newsom.

Alec was the son of Sir John Downer, one of the architects of the Australian Federal Constitution. Oxford-educated, wealthy and gifted, Alec modelled his prisoner-of-war life carefully upon the principle of knowing "people in high places" and making sure that they did what he wanted them to.

Griffin was a barrister, a scratch golfer and a witty talker. He, too, saw the virtue of knowing people in high places and played his hand with skill throughout the war.

Newsom, short, incorrigibly cheerful and possessed of a riotous laugh, was exactly what he should have been—the senior representative of Kolynos Toothpaste in South Australia.

These three men, the scholar, the lawyer and the salesman, ran the library. Irrked beyond endurance by the "officers-must-be-saluted-and-treated-like-tin-gods" nonsense, they called everyone who came to their library—be he colonel or private—"Mister"! In this atmosphere of almost pre-war courtesy, they studied their readers' tastes, persuaded men who never had read to start, urged everyone to steal books and contribute them to the library, ignored the nastiness that was Nippon and—whenever trouble arose with any of the minions of officialdom—promptly had it squashed by their tame "people in high places". In short, they managed to maintain a centre where the cultured tones of Oxford, the caustic wit of the Bar, and

the infectious cackle of the bon viveur could all be heard at once, as if the absurdities of war had never intruded upon their carefully-guarded lives.

AND, AS THE LAST TOUCH to our background, there was added the bizarre company of the officers of an Italian submarine. This submarine and seven others had left Vichy France for Singapore, each carrying technicians and duplicate blueprints, in the hope that one, at least, might run the gauntlet and reach the factories of Nippon.

One did. And only one. It surfaced—after a harrowing trip—in Singapore Harbour in 1943. It was greeted by a Japanese admiral who informed its crew that Italy had, since their departure from Europe, surrendered.

“Would they,” the admiral inquired, “like to continue the battle from Singapore?”

“No,” said the Italians who, as they explained to us with great frankness, had never greatly enjoyed any battles, “they would not!”

The Japanese admiral regretted this and, all his powers of persuasion having failed to change the Italians’ attitude, he popped them into gaol with us.

In consequence, I met Mario Brutti Liberati. He had about eight other names and was a marquis as well, but this we ignored. To us he was Mario. He was an authority on classical music, naval engineering and women—in the reverse order. He spoke excellent, though at times quaint, English. He was generous, amusing, widely-travelled and enterprising. He taught me Italian and introduced us to the art of cooking snails in palm oil. Mario was a stimulating talker in anybody’s language.

This immediate circle, with others not so close but just as good, with the playhouse and *Exile* and the daily BBC news, was the mental stimulant which stopped me—after ten hours a day of the aerodrome—from going cuckoo.

THE FIRST REAL NEWS of our new gaol life came rushing through the cells and corridors and courtyards one lunchtime in a carefully concealed gust of enthusiasm. It was June, 1944. The Allies had landed once more in Europe. Into the eyes of every man came a gleam of anticipation.

“Soon,” said Piddington, “this bloody war will end.”

Chapter Ten

Two elements arose to enliven our work on the aerodrome. One was a new guard; the other was the inception of a regular reconnaissance by Allied planes—Superforts which, 30,000 feet up and serenely deliberate in that brilliant sunlit sky, gleamed silver and almost translucent, like fairies. They were very pretty, those reconnaissance planes. The Japanese hated the sight of them.

Our new guard—the second enlivening element—was a delightful little gentleman called the Ice-Cream Man. He was called the Ice-Cream Man because he was rather less than five feet tall, wore a white topee, which covered most of his face except a chin with a lamentable tendency to recede, sported a white linen coat and white gloves and shouted incessantly. After the first glance the British troops were unanimous—he was the Ice-Cream Man. He was never referred to as anything else.

The Ice-Cream Man was now in charge of our work on the aerodrome. As a second-class private that was a power he enjoyed. He would assemble our squads each morning in the pinkish light, and then he would announce: "Nippon Number One. All men say 'Mastah'," and point to himself. Then the British squad would shout out all their favourite terms for the Japanese—except Master. And the Australian squad in its turn would be riotous with a clamour of, "Yellow bastards ... apes ... galahs ... drongos." It was all very noisy and undignified, but gratifying. Also, it used to waste twenty minutes every morning when otherwise we might have been working.

Then the Ice-Cream Man, screaming with rage, would point angrily. "You," he would say, "come heah," and motion a man forward with that peculiarly Japanese downwards flap of the outstretched fingers. Then again, "You, come heah." And again, and again, until he had six or seven Englishmen and Australians. These he would beat unconscious with his short truncheon-like cane. And then, the Ice-Cream Man having established the superiority of Nippon, we would all march off to work and I would return once more to my mental searchings on the subjects of Messrs. Pythagoras and Bruch.

THE DAY'S WORK OVER, just as it began to darken a little, we would march back to the gaol through the scrub, catching snails and frogs on the way. Once inside the big steel gate, the column of men

streamed out into the courtyards, all at once, hundreds upon hundreds of naked men milling round the few showers.

Almost before they had finished these ablutions, the day's mess orderlies were filing up to the central cookhouse—and a few minutes later clumping back, heavily laden with dixies and tubs of close-packed rice. Each man would then queue up, give his number, collect the pathetic dollop of rice and the few stewed leaves from the garden and go off to wherever his favourite corner was.

I would frequently sit down to eat with Searle and Piddington. Piddington and I cultivated a small dried pea—called towgay—in between wet sacks and ate it when its green shoots were one centimetre in length. Each day we had a spoonful, which was good for beriberi. As well we added a spoonful each of red palm oil. Meant only for the manufacture of soap it tasted vile, but doctors assured us that it was nutritious, so each day we ate it.

That was our ordinary meal—rice, greens, towgay and palm oil. But occasionally we would catch a dog or a cat or a snake and then we would prepare a magnificent stew and eat till we bulged. For the information of the shrinking reader, snake tastes like gritty chicken mixed with fish; dog tastes like rather coarse beef; cat like rabbit, only better; and snails (Changi-style) like something cut off a tyre by Messrs. Dunlop.

HUGH WENT TO HOSPITAL with malaria. We Thailand Railway people seemed constantly to be going down with something. We tended at times to feel sorry for ourselves.

One day Black Jack—the senior Australian officer in Changi—collected all us railway men together in the one gaol courtyard and spoke to us. “You blokes,” he said, “had a rough time. We all know that. We’re all sorry. But it’s over now and I just want to tell you that at the moment you’re turning into the greatest mob of rogues, thieves, malingerers and vagabonds I ever set eyes on. Now snap out of it! That’s all!!” and with that he left.

It did us a lot of good. From that day forward the melancholic sense that we were different, that we deserved more of things than other men, died. We became one society—the men of Changi Gaol.

CHRISTMAS OF 1944 CAME and with it presents and cards and, of course, at the playhouse, a pantomime. This pantomime was called *Twinkletoes* and, like all good pantos, was topical, tuneful, colourful and hilarious.

The New Year sped on and I celebrated my twenty-fourth birthday. I was touched to receive so many cards, and these laboriously produced greetings in a society where any paper commanded a price of a dollar for two square inches (enough to wrap a cigarette) were especially touching. There was also homemade saki (fermented rice and pineapple skin) with which to drink toasts. Altogether the day was memorable, even if the saki did have a most evil aftereffect.

Then came February and the anniversary of the fall of Singapore, and the Japanese, as always, celebrated riotously. It was not a celebration in which we displayed much enthusiasm, except that this year, for the first time, we felt: "This, you little apes, will be your last!"

And one night at midnight when all would normally have been quiet, the gaol was suddenly rent with howls and screams and the banging of tins and the clatter of eating irons against the wall. Frantically the guard fell out and machineguns were swung round to cover this revolt. But before any shots could be fired, the clamour subsided and everywhere there was silence again. The cause of it all—an Australian with a leaning towards statistics had worked out that that midnight marked our one thousandth day in captivity. He and his friends were celebrating.

THE PLAYHOUSE DECIDED NEXT to stage a cavalcade of song. This commended itself enormously to the Pommy element, who like nothing so well as good old tunes, and even we Australians caught the infection of their enthusiasm.

Bill Williams, the pianist who had dragged a small portable pedal organ all round Thailand and played boogie on it in every camp, planned the show. Orchestrations were attacked with enthusiasm by a dozen different men in the band. Searle designed a score of quickly-changed sets. The cavalcade was to cover the gamut of twentieth-century popular tunes and to conclude with the latest Changi compositions.

The first night was an elaborate affair attended by the entire Japanese administration, including General Saito. Quickly the show swung into action and as song followed song, set followed set and novelty followed novelty, it became obvious that the audience—Japanese and all—were gripped.

Then came the finale, a new composition of Bill Williams's. First of all, with much hooting and smoke, the bow of a steamer sailed

majestically onto the stage. As it reached centre stage, Bill started singing his new song, "On Our Return". The company joined in, flooding onto the stage like voyagers about to embark. The audience was electrified and joined in the last chorus. The curtain rang down and midst frantic applause Saito and his entourage stalked out—in sullen silence.

That was the last show to be staged in the playhouse. Saito, furious at the title of the song, and at its sentiment, and at its reception, banned all further entertainment and would barely be dissuaded from having Williams and the entire company executed. The war, he pointed out angrily, would last a hundred years. Nippon was Number One!

Negotiations to get the ban relaxed were futile. Saito stuck grimly to his decision. Not only that, but rations were cut and a search staged for radios.

At a final meeting to discuss the matter, all the British administrative officers sat before Saito and Takahashi, who listened to all that the interpreter relayed to them and looked implacable.

The British officers thereupon uttered some strongly-worded comments of their own on both Saito and Takahashi. These the Australian interpreter did not trouble to pass on.

Abruptly Saito indicated that the meeting was over. As was the formality demanded at that time each British officer bowed to Saito—usually a rather perfunctory nod, for the Britisher does not acquire an Oriental bow with ease. The British colonel, however, believed in doing the job thoroughly and bowed low. As Takahashi surveyed this courtly inclination of the colonel's body, he turned to the Australian interpreter and, in perfect English, remarked: "Rather Elizabethan, don't you think?" This was the only remark he ever made in English and it set the entire gaol furiously to wondering.

WITH THE CLOSING OF THE THEATRE life came to revolve more around the art of conversation and the consolation to be derived from the company of one's friends.

At night then, the day's work done, Changi became dotted with groups in every courtyard who sat and in quiet tones talked of the news and their plans and their homes—whilst all the time the inevitable fag passed amicably from hand to hand for each member of that united group to take a drag.

Talk and laughter rippled round those courtyards in low murmurs. There was never discontent nor anger—always that low

confident tone and the plans for the future and the blithe certainty that in six months the war would be won.

And after all this lights out and to sleep. The cells and huts full of soldiers sleeping with that same childlike abandon that always tugged at your heart. Why should they be so thin and sleep for years in gaols away from home when they looked as helpless as that?

And one morning we woke up to find that Germany had surrendered. The war in Europe was over. With mocking eyes we looked at Nippon, whose turn was next. Nippon said, "*Doitsu*"—they always called Germany *Doitsu*—"Doitsu Number Ten. Nippon Number One. War finish in one hundred years."

WITH THE END OF THE EUROPEAN WAR to be explained away and the first air raids over Singapore to add point to the advances in the South-East Asian war, Nippon did not remain calm.

When each air raid came—a hundred fairy-like Super Fortresses at a time—the Japanese air force fled till the All Clear sounded: but this did not save their shipping in the docks from destruction, nor their stores from being burned, nor their dumps from being blown up. And all the time more and more vessels limped into the docks in the Johore Straits for repairs that could not be done. Meantime, Burma was being cleared by an avenging 14th Army and Mountbatten was assembling an amphibious invasion force to retake Malaya.

Angrily the Japanese demanded working parties for unknown tasks in Malaya. For the second time in my career I crossed the Causeway to work on a project that did not bode well.

We left the gaol in batches of a hundred. We were stripped of everything when we left and radios were consequently *not* part of our equipment when we landed in our new camps in Johore. Arrived there, we were told that we were to build tunnels for ambushes, earthworks for defences, walls for dumps. We were to work until the last minute, carrying ammunition where necessary, then—when hand-to-hand fighting became imminent—we were to be shot.

Under this constant threat we laboured thenceforth. It was not pleasant, nor was the work. Our group was detailed for tunnelling. We dug tunnels about four metres wide and about four metres high as far into the sides of hills as possible. Dug them into clay with pitprops of green rubber. Soon the rubber rotted in the damp and the clay dropped, a whole hill of it, and the tunnels filled. Often there were men inside. Once the falling clay grips you round the

ankles, with its heavy clammy grip, you can't move. Some of us were lucky; others were not. The Japanese seemed indifferent as to what happened to us, so long as the tunnels went in deeply and quickly and the tailings were removed far away so that no indication might be given to the invading troops that an ambush had been prepared.

For weeks we worked thus, returning at night to a gloomy hut in the rubber, damp and closely guarded. Only once did we get a respite and that was a day at the Johore Barracks, where we were required to move a store of clothing. In the process we found a small toilet stacked from floor to roof with linen bags full of Japanese army biscuits. Little round biscuits like marbles and hard as iron. All day we stole and munched these biscuits. By nightfall, though our jaws ached agonizingly, we had consumed the lot and felt extremely well fed.

Then came a rumour that we were to be shot next day. And to settle our fate—for if we were to be shot we had determined to be shot running—one of us stole a wireless set and listened in that night. That night was August 15, 1945, and he told us not to worry, that he had just heard that the war was over. The emperor of Japan, overwhelmed by the power of atomic bombs and faced with the prospect of an invasion of Nippon, had unconditionally surrendered.

Three days later even the Japanese themselves admitted that we need no longer work. They ceased to bellow and instead bowed politely when we passed. The food which they had recently declared to be non-existent, they now produced in vast quantities so that we might eat our fill. Likewise drugs appeared from everywhere and in profusion.

Then we all assembled in Changi Gaol, thousands upon thousands of men, until there were 17,000. British paratroopers arrived and were greeted politely by the Japanese. Then Mountbatten arrived and (though we were ordered not to by our administration) a few of us walked the seventeen miles into Singapore to see him accept the local formal surrender of the Japanese in South-East Asia.

Afterwards I walked down to the harbour and on board the *Sussex*—where I was fed and washed and given clean clothes by the ever-hospitable matelots of the Royal Navy. I stayed there, smuggled away, for two days: then returned to the gaol in a jeep with eighteen other "sightseeing" POWs.

At the gaol I heard that the Ice-Cream Man no longer lived—which didn't surprise me. Also that we were now in the hands of an organization known as RAPWI, which meant "Rehabilitation of

Allied Prisoners of War and Internees" and was surely impressive enough. When, a month later, we still languished on the island impatiently awaiting shipping home, RAPWI was re-christened—in the British manner—Retain All Prisoners of War Indefinitely.

This seemed to sting someone into activity, for at once we were drafted into shiploads and the docks became crowded with transports.

We said our goodbyes.

Mario left, waving an excited Latin farewell, for Italy. Ron Searle departed for Britain and fame. David Griffin flew to Sydney and the Bar; Downer to Adelaide and the Federal Australian Parliament. Hugh went home on one ship, Piddington on another, I on a third.

The careful fabric of one's personal life, built up over four years, disintegrated at a single blow. One felt curiously alone as the ship sailed out of Singapore Harbour. All those blokes, Pommies and Australian: all those ties—gone. And then I brightened. After all, the sea was green and clear: the sun was warm and free: there was food a'plenty and no need for anxiety as the old ship ploughed her confident way eastwards, away from Singapore. We were all going home.



RUSSELL BRADDON, pictured here in POW days by his friend Ronald Searle, was born in 1921. After the war his health took a few years to recover; then in 1949 he left his native Australia for England, determined on a writing career. Writing and broadcasting have absorbed most of his considerable energy ever since: *The Naked Island*, published in 1952, swiftly became a classic, and to date has been followed by more than twenty-five works of fiction and nonfiction.

It was with the greatest excitement that Edmund Hillary first saw the Himalayas in 1951. To the young New Zealander those mountains were a breathtaking challenge: in their midst stood Everest, at 29,002 feet the highest mountain in the world and as yet unconquered. No climber had come within a thousand feet of the summit, the bravest of them defeated by snow-blindness, cold and the dizzying altitude.

Just two years later, Edmund Hillary's chance came when he was invited to join John Hunt's Everest expedition. His brilliant account of that expedition vividly recalls the agonies and frustrations he suffered with his gallant team-mates as they pressed slowly towards the summit. At times their attempt seemed doomed to failure. But in the end, Hillary and his Sherpa guide Tenzing were to stand triumphantly at the top of the world.

FIRST FOOTSTEPS

I WAS SIXTEEN before I ever saw a mountain. My father's rapidly-expanding bee business had occupied all my holidays and I'd learned to do a full-size job before I entered my teens. But in the winter of 1935 I'd saved a little money and I was allowed to join a school skiing party to Ruapehu—one of our large New Zealand volcanoes. I was a tall, bony, clumsy-looking youth and far from the brightest lad in the class, and I don't think I'd been more than fifty miles outside of Auckland. I'd heard glowing tales from the other boys about skiing, but it didn't mean a great deal to me—all I wanted was a chance to see the world.

I saw my first snow at midnight when we stepped off our train at the National Park station. It was a tremendous thrill, and before long snowballs, as hard as iron, were flying through the air. As our bus carried us to the château, its lights sparked into life a fairyland of snow and pines and frozen streams. When I crawled into my bunk at two in the morning I felt I was in a strange and exciting new world.

For ten glorious days we skied and played on the lower slopes and I don't think I ever looked towards the summit. We had been told the upper parts of the mountain were dangerous and I viewed them with respect and fear. I returned home in a glow of fiery enthusiasm for sun and cold and snow—especially snow!

But I didn't see a great deal of the snow in the next few years. It took two years of university life to convince my parents that I was unsuited to an academic career; not that I was particularly dull, but I was certainly lazy. So I joined my father as a full-time beekeeper. It was a good life—a life of air and sun and hard physical work. It was also a life of uncertainty and adventure; a constant fight against the vagaries of the weather and a mad rush when all our 1,600 hives decided to swarm at once. During the exciting months of the honey flow, the dream of a bumper crop would drive us on through long hard hours of labour. And in the winter I often tramped around our lovely bush-clad hills and learned a little about self-reliance and felt the first stirrings of interest in the unknown.

When I was twenty, I visited the South Island of New Zealand

with a friend. It was my first long trip and we planned to stay at a famous tourist resort, The Hermitage, in the heart of the giant peaks of the Southern Alps. After a magnificent drive through the mountains, we arrived in the early afternoon. It was a perfect day and I looked with growing excitement at the great peaks towering over us, with their huge rock walls, glaciers, and avalanche-strewn slopes. Strangely stirred by it all, I felt restless for action and decided to walk to the nearest snow, high up in a gully in the Sealy Range behind the hotel. I set off, stumbling over loose rocks in my light shoes. I soon realized it was much farther than I had judged, but I kept going. And at last I reached it—a tattered remnant of old avalanche snow. I kicked steps up and down it and then, with an astonishing sense of achievement, climbed down to The Hermitage.

As I sat in the lounge that evening, still restless and excited, I looked up to see two young men entering. They were fit and tanned, with an unmistakable air of competence. A whisper went round the room, “They’ve just made the first traverse of Mount Cook from north to south!” Soon they became the centre of an admiring group. As I hovered a little forlornly on the outside, I heard one of them say, “I was pretty tired when we got to the icecap, but Harry was like a tiger and almost dragged me to the top.” I found out later that they were Stevenson and Dick, a famous climbing partnership.

I retreated to a corner, filled with a sense of futility at the dull, mundane nature of my existence. Those chaps were really getting a bit of excitement out of life. Tomorrow *I’d* climb something!

My friend Brian agreed to give it a try, and we arranged for a guide. I went to bed in a fever of anticipation, but when we met our guide after breakfast I couldn’t help feeling a slight sense of disappointment. He looked the part with his weatherbeaten face and Tyrolean hat, but his years and excess weight didn’t give an impression of dash. In dampening tones he informed us that we’d tackle “Olivier”, a small peak above The Hermitage. “Of course, if it’s too far we can spend the afternoon at the Sealy lakes!”

He led off at such a slow and steady pace that I dashed on ahead, the cool crisp air and the wonderful sense of freedom spurring me on as I rose above the valley. I’d been at the lakes half an hour before our guide hove into view. Brian and I swam while he lit a fire and boiled a billy. Then, with ravenous appetites, we attacked our lunch.

A thousand feet of snow still stretched between us and the crest of the range. At my impatient movements our guide sighed deeply and led off up the slope. This was real mountaineering! The snow was

pleasantly firm, but the long slope underneath gave an impression of exposure and I followed the guide docilely. We reached the crest of the ridge and looked over into a magnificent valley of great glaciers and fine peaks. A few yards along the ridge was a rocky outcrop. I couldn't restrain myself and scrambled up. Next moment I was on the summit of my first mountain.

I returned to The Hermitage after the happiest day I had ever spent. My new enthusiasm for the mountains went home with me the next day and gave me little rest in the years that followed. Two books became my climbing inspiration. One was *Camp Six* by Frank Smythe and the other *Nanda Devi* by Eric Shipton. With Smythe I climbed every weary foot of the way up the north side of Everest, suffering with him the driving wind, the bitter cold and the dreadful fight for breath. When he was finally turned back at 28,000 feet, I didn't regard it as a defeat but as a triumph. Shipton's story struck a different chord in me, for his Himalayan climbs epitomized for a New Zealander the ideal in mountaineering. His problems, although larger, were the same as ours: limited finance, difficulty in moving quickly through tough country, the need to carry all your own supplies, and the constant battle against weather and sheer misery.

During the next few years I climbed a lot of small peaks and a few of the big ones, and gained a good deal of experience in running my own trips. But I still didn't really know much about the technical side of mountaineering. Then in 1946 I met Guide Harry Ayres, who was New Zealand's outstanding climber. He took me under his wing and for three marvellous seasons we climbed the big peaks together. From Harry I learned a little of that subtle science of snow and icecraft that only experience can really teach.

Then in 1950 George Lowe set off the spark that finally got us both to the Himalayas. I had never climbed with George, but we were old friends and he had a fine record of difficult climbs. We were walking down the Tasman glacier together when George suddenly said, "Have you ever thought about going to the Himalayas, Ed?" Actually I'd thought about it often and it was most exciting to find someone with the same views. We decided we'd organize a party.

Apparently another group of New Zealanders, all first-class climbers, were also making plans about the Himalayas, and they invited George and me to join them. Their plans sounded really worthwhile, and we immediately accepted. But the bugbear of finance reared its ugly head, and our party dwindled until there were

me. Riddiford was a man of tremendous enthusiasm and organizing ability, and finally we raised the necessary money. Our main objective was the peak Mukut Parbat, 23,760 feet, in the Himalayas.

We were deep inside the Himalayas in the summer of 1951 when someone sent us a newspaper cutting with the exciting news of a new attempt on Everest. . . . What we'd do to get on a trip like that! The cutting explained that all the early expeditions to Everest had approached the mountain through Tibet, trying to climb its northern slopes. There had been eight expeditions, beginning in 1921 but, in spite of unbelievable courage and endurance, they hadn't got higher than a thousand feet from the top. It almost seemed as though there was some invisible barrier at 28,000 feet through which no man could go.

After the war, Tibet was closed to Europeans. But Everest lies on the border between Tibet and Nepal, although the Nepalese side of the mountain was generally regarded as impossibly steep to climb. The Nepalese had always excluded Europeans from their country, but now adopted a more liberal policy, and a small reconnaissance expedition led by Eric Shipton was going to examine the Nepalese approach to the mountain that autumn.

The four of us talked enviously of the thrill it must be to go on an Everest expedition. Then we returned to our own problems. By this time we had learned many lessons about Himalayan travel, lessons in handling temperamental coolies and in dealing with the local peoples. We'd felt the strength drain out of our limbs and the will out of our minds in the thin air at great heights. And Lowe and I had formed an energetic and happy partnership.

Riddiford, Cotter and Pasang, our Sherpa, reached the summit of Mukut Parbat after a great struggle on July 11 and we all returned to Ranikhet in India thin and wasted but with a glow of pride at having climbed seven new peaks. As we entered our hotel, unshaven and dirty, we were handed a cablegram. It was an invitation to Riddiford and myself to join Shipton. We were on our way to Everest!

TO EVEREST, 1951

After a wild trip on roads deep in mud, across the rapids of the great Arun River and up narrow mountain tracks, we caught up with Shipton and his party at the village of Dingla on the Indian-Nepalese border.

It was September 8, 1951, and the monsoon season was nearing an end as Riddiford and I, with two of our Sherpas, Pasang and Nyima, finally climbed up to the village. I couldn't help wondering what the four men we were meeting would be like. Of course we knew about Shipton's tough trips, his ability to go to great heights, and his policy of having cheap and mobile expeditions by living largely off the land. He was the most famous living Himalayan mountaineer. But what did he look like? And what about his three companions? I'd never heard of them. I looked at Riddiford. Thin and bony, with a scraggy beard and scruffy, dirty clothes, he didn't look prepossessing and I probably looked even rougher. For all I knew these Englishmen might shave every day; they might be sticklers for the right thing. We'd have to smarten up a bit and watch our language.

Feeling not a little like a couple of errant schoolboys going to visit the headmaster, we entered Dingla and followed a Sherpa into the dark doorway of a large building, and up some stairs. As we came into a room four figures rose to meet us. My first feeling was one of relief. I had rarely seen a more disreputable-looking bunch, and my visions of changing for dinner faded away for ever.

Shipton quickly introduced his three companions: Bill Murray, a dour Scotsman who had led the first all-Scottish expedition to the Himalayas the previous year; Dr. Michael Ward, a well-built young chap with an easy, impetuous manner; and Tom Bourdillon, an enormous chap who had a fine record of formidable climbs.

Shipton explained that they were experiencing great difficulty in getting enough porters. The inhabitants didn't like travelling in the monsoon; they feared the flooded rivers and in any case were busy on their own crops.

However, Shipton and Ang Tharkay, Shipton's famous chief Sherpa, conferred at length with the village headman and finally achieved some success. Small and compactly built, with great vitality, Ang Tharkay was proving invaluable. It was impossible not to like his patient and kindly face. They agreed on a rate of pay for the trip to Namche Bazar, but the headman stipulated that the coolies must carry loads of ninety pounds each. He was afraid he might get into trouble if we were delayed in his district any longer and this was the only way he could get his small number of coolies to move us. We knew that a load of ninety pounds on the wet and slippery tracks would make for extremely slow progress, but at least

some sort of shelter for the night, and after a long hunt discovered a deserted shepherd's hut of plaited bamboo mats. The Sherpas started a crackling fire of bamboo splinters and life became a little brighter.

For a change it wasn't raining when we started in the morning and we could see a wonderful view of the bush-clad ridges stretching in front of us. Soon the fog and rain closed in again, and we started searching for another shelter. I came on some squalid bamboo dwellings—a protection for the high-country cattle. At least we'd have a roof over our heads. Life was pretty grim when we settled down there that night, with wet clothes and sleeping bags, but nothing seemed to disturb Shipton. Sitting in his sleeping bag, with his umbrella over his head, he puffed at his pipe and read a novel in the flickering candlelight.

For the next week we were never dry, and the leeches had a veritable feast off us. We climbed up and down muddy tracks, crossed flooded rivers, slid and slipped on steep hillsides, and camped wherever we could get a rough roof over our heads. On September 21 we woke to our first fine morning, and had a delightful walk through the bush and up to a tiny pass, with a magnificent view up the great valley of the Dudh Kosi River. The hills of eastern Nepal are the homeland of the Sherpas, who are of Tibetan stock. Our Sherpas enthusiastically pointed out places of interest in their Nepalese homeland. As we travelled up the valley we received a warm reception wherever we went. We were dragged into their homes and plied with their alcoholic beverages, *chang* and *rakshi*. Sherpas who had carried loads on Everest and other mountains came from all directions, proud to renew their acquaintanceship with Shipton.

We camped that night in the village of Phakding and slept out under the stars. Next day, as we climbed steadily higher, we saw the vast rock and ice wall between Nuptse and Lhotse, and towering over it all the summit pyramid of Everest—only twenty miles away but twenty thousand feet above us.

At the village of Namche Bazar, the capital of the district, we spent several days recruiting Sherpas and accumulating food. We also took possession of our own equipment—string singlets, woollen underclothes, windproof trousers, nylon jackets, down jackets, double-layered windproof parkas, woollen balaclavas and silk, woollen and leather gloves.

We had decided to establish our Base Camp on the Khumbu glacier and to investigate from there the southern approach to

Everest. We weren't particularly optimistic about finding a route. The only photograph we possessed of the slopes leading to the South Col was a rather unsatisfactory aerial one. It made the upper slopes look impossibly steep. We called it our "horror photograph" and it was produced whenever one of the party became too optimistic.

DISCOVERY OF THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

It took only three days to get to the foot of Everest from Namche Bazar, but in many ways they were the most dramatic days I had ever spent. The rivers foamed through great gorges; the hillsides were clothed in dense forest. Above them towered the unbelievable peaks of the Khumbu region—mighty ice-fluted faces, terrific rock buttresses, and razor-sharp jagged ice ridges soaring up to 22,000 feet. Perched amongst them is the monastery of Thyangboche. No temple could have a more glorious setting, wrapped as it is in an aura of peace and meditation. The lamas were kindly, gentle folk and entertained us regally.

As we climbed on up beside the Khumbu glacier, altitude had its inevitable effect. Riddiford and I, who had been at high altitudes recently, were reasonably happy, as was Shipton, who seemed to acclimatize automatically, but the other members of the party found the going very hard indeed. After several days of reconnaissance we finally pitched our Base-Camp tents in a trough of the glacier at a height of 17,500 feet.

Shipton and I took a pair of binoculars and went up the moraine behind the camp. Standing on this huge pile of stones and other debris brought down by the glacier, we had a thrilling view of Everest, immense and apparently as remote as ever, with its long, graceful plume of wind-driven snow. We examined with interest the southern side of the mountain, the way to it barred by an unexplored ice-filled valley called the Western Cwm. We were far from confident that there was a way up its obviously precipitous sides onto the mountain. Even getting into it was going to be a formidable task, for on every side it was surrounded by an immense mountain wall. There was only one break—where the glacier filling the valley drained through a narrow gap between the tremendous precipices of Everest and Nuptse. Crushed in the narrow gap, this glacier falls in a shattered chaos of ice blocks and crevasses to the Khumbu glacier 2,500 feet below. We returned to Base Camp, far from optimistic.

On the clear and fine morning of September 30, Riddiford, Bourdillon, Ward, and Pasang left to examine the icefall. Shipton and I went to try to get a look into the Western Cwm. We scrambled onto the bottom of a ridge which came down off Mt. Pumori. We were both fairly fit, but the height started taking its toll, and we collapsed with relief on a little ledge at 20,000 feet.

I didn't expect to see much of the Western Cwm from here, but to my astonishment the whole valley lay revealed to our eyes. A narrow, snowy trough swept from the top of the icefall and climbed steeply up the face of Lhotse at the head of the Cwm. Shipton said with disbelief, "There's a route there!"

From the floor of the Western Cwm it looked possible to climb the Lhotse glacier—steep and crevassed though it appeared—and from there a long, steep traverse led across to a deep depression at 26,000 feet on the south side of the mountain—the South Col. It looked difficult, but a route it was. We had neither the equipment nor the men to take advantage of our discovery, but we could return next year and attack the mountain in force. It was warm and comfortable on our ledge and we ate our lunch contentedly. I returned down the ridge in a daze of excitement—I'd been one of the first men in history to look into the Western Cwm.

The icefall reconnaissance party came back to Base Camp after a long day. Riddiford and Pasang had been the most successful, reaching a thousand feet up the left of the icefall. This was good news.

On October 2, a miserable, snowy day, Shipton, Bourdillon, Riddiford and I moved a camp over to the foot of the icefall. Three of our Sherpas stayed with us. For the next day and a half it snowed steadily and we didn't move from the tents. But on October 4, a fine, cold morning, we left for the icefall. The going was surprisingly easy, and it didn't take us long to reach Riddiford's highest point, about 19,000 feet. The snow was bitterly cold, and Riddiford and I in particular were suffering agonies from frozen feet. When we reached a sunny spot we had to take our boots off and chafe our feet back to life. Bourdillon found the altitude a little much, so decided to stop and wait there for us. Now, the climbing became much more difficult. Periodically great masses of ice detached themselves from the hanging glaciers high above us and swept out onto the icefall, spreading ruin and destruction in their paths. We kept well to the middle, and taking turns leading, we struggled up. Our progress was pitifully slow, and the lack of oxygen strained our lungs to the utmost as we plunged upwards in snow that was often hip deep. Finally we

dragged ourselves up onto a snow shelf and saw in front of us the last great crevasse before the crest of the Western Cwm.

It was a very wide crevasse, partly filled in with snow, and the upper wall, instead of being vertical, was a long and very steep snow slope: a nasty problem. Two of our Sherpas asked to remain behind, but Pasang continued. It was my turn to lead and I started off down into it. I made a track across the lumps of ice, up a vertical ice wall and then, very cautiously, across the fragile bridge that spanned the icy depths. I was far from happy about the condition of the snow, which was loose and very deep, tied together by a crust packed by the wind; I was afraid it might avalanche.

The others climbed up to join me, and as nobody mentioned the snow condition I thought, Perhaps I'm being unduly cautious. It was now Pasang's turn to lead. He plunged upward, followed by Riddiford and Shipton, while I belayed the party by sinking my ice axe deeply and securely into the slope. When they reached the top of the vertical section I moved up to them and belayed again. With a tightening of my stomach muscles I watched Pasang struggling across the snow in a steadily rising traverse. I didn't like the place at all and felt we shouldn't be there. But Pasang was making considerable progress and before long he, Riddiford and Shipton, about twenty feet apart, were spread out on the face and inching their way across.

Then, with a sudden crack, the whole slope broke up into large blocks and started sliding with horrifying rapidity towards the gaping maw of the crevasse. I threw all my weight on my ice axe and watched the other three being swept downwards.

With a leap in the air like a cat Pasang shot off the moving blocks and thrust his ice axe deep into the stable snow above. With remarkable balance, Shipton leaped from lump to lump and threw himself onto the relative safety of my belay. But Riddiford was rapidly carried towards the crevasse where the snow blocks were disappearing with a dull roar. Then our ropes came tight, cutting into Riddiford's waist as the weight of the avalanche fell against him. He rolled onto his back, wriggled free, and lay there exhausted.

It took quite a while to calm our pounding hearts and gasping lungs. And then Riddiford started moving. We tugged on the ropes and slowly he dragged himself across towards us.

Depressed and discouraged, we went back to camp, supped on tea and soup, then lay in our sleeping bags and discussed the day's activities. There didn't seem much point in persisting with the icefall

while the snow was in such bad condition. Shipton decided that we'd break the party up into two groups and go off on exploratory trips for a few weeks, then come back to the icefall.

Shipton invited me to accompany him southeast of Everest, to a completely unexplored and unmapped area. We descended into an autumn paradise of blazing colour, a world of crimson and gold trees below the white purity of soaring ice and the deep dark blue of the sky. For ten days we explored in country that men had never seen but it wasn't so much our achievements I remembered as the character of Eric Shipton: his ability to be calm and comfortable in any circumstances; his insatiable curiosity to know what lay over the next hill; and, above all, his remarkable power to transform the pain and misery of high-altitude life into a great adventure.

We went back to Base Camp to find snow conditions on the icefall much safer, and on October 23 we decided to try once again to get into the Western Cwm. We reached Riddiford's point at nine o'clock, and started up along the old route. As we came over the crest we looked for signs of our old track—and then we blinked and looked again. The whole area had completely changed, as though some vast subterranean vault under the glacier had collapsed and the ice had fallen into it. Below us was a depression filled with a chaos of shattered ice blocks. It shook us up a bit to see the complete destruction of ground on which we'd been confidently walking.

After a good deal of careful work, I managed to get on top of the cliffs, to find that they were crisscrossed with recently made cracks—the whole area was completely shattered. We retreated speedily to safer ground. Then we tried to find a way round this bad patch. To the left was impossible; great ice cliffs barred the way. After a long spell of route-finding amongst the séracs, or pinnacles of ice, on the right, we emerged only to find an area of much greater devastation. We returned to camp worried and depressed over the "Atom Bomb" area, as we were already calling it.

On October 28, we set off again, to make one last attempt to reach the Western Cwm. Not without trepidation we climbed over the tumbled ice blocks, and moved as quickly as possible over several hundred feet of cracked area to unbroken ground. We had to admit it was a lot more stable than it had been the time before. We reached the steep slope on the crest of the icefall where the avalanche had stopped us three weeks before, then split up into three parties. Two parties had to turn back, but Bourdillon, by shovelling all the loose surface snow off the lower lip of a crevasse, forced a rather dubious

route to the top. With some excitement we came to a long snowy shelf and looked ahead. A deep, narrow valley swept away from us, and at the head of it was Lhotse. We were on the threshold of the Western Cwm! But a vast crevasse split the glacier from side to side. Without suitable equipment, this was as far as we could go.

We returned to base with the strong feeling that the icefall was the key to any attempt on Everest from the Nepalese side. It was dangerous, but could be climbed. We planned to return the following May with rope and tackle and ladders. If we didn't attack the icefall then, someone else would. The competitive standards of alpine mountaineering were coming to the Himalayas and we might as well compete or pull out.

We descended to Namche Bazar amid the early signs of winter. Here we parted: the four English members went north to the Nangpa La. Riddiford and I, who had been away from home a long time, had to rush back to catch an early boat, so we decided to return to Katmandu over a pass that was regarded by the Sherpas as a very difficult one, down through a valley ablaze with crimson and gold, and then for eight days through the beautiful Nepalese countryside. In the villages harvesting was in full swing and every night we heard singing and dancing. The houses were stacked high with grain and the trees bowed low under their crops of oranges. I have never seen such happy and contented people.

On November 17 we arrived in Katmandu. There we had a serious blow to our hopes and plans. The Swiss had been granted permission for an attempt on Everest in 1952. However, with admirable courage, the Joint Himalayan Committee of the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club decided to go ahead in spite of the Swiss attempt. Permission had already been granted by the Nepalese government for a British expedition to Everest in 1953, so the committee decided to send a training expedition to the Himalayas in 1952. This would provide a pool of climbers who had shown that they could function effectively at great altitudes and it would also give an opportunity to carry out experiments with oxygen apparatus.

PREPARATION ON CHO OYU

It was a great moment when I received a cable from Shipton. He had been asked to lead the training expedition to Cho Oyu, which at 26,870 feet was the seventh highest peak in the world and only about

twenty miles to the west of Everest. He wanted me and George Lowe to go along. Riddiford was coming again and so was Bourdillon.

We all met on March 29 at Jaynagar, a railhead station on the Nepalese border with India. It wasn't long before the veneer of civilization had vanished and in old ragged clothes and sprouting beards we were struggling with the problems of organization and transport. It was a relief to see Ang Tharkay and the other Sherpas again, and the village men were keen to work as porters.

On April 3 we set off with sixty-eight coolies into the foothills. The next five days were extremely pleasant, and on April 7 we climbed up to the village of Okhaldhunga. In its magnificent location at 6,000 feet on a hilltop, it catches every cooling breeze.

Our route now lay in the high country and we spent much time in the delightfully cool temperatures of 10,000 feet and over. The great ice-topped bulk of Cho Oyu came into view and our enthusiasm flared into life. On April 16 we reached Namche Bazar and were enthusiastically welcomed by many old friends. The Swiss Everest party had left for the Khumbu glacier the previous day.

On April 19 we set off up the Bhote Kosi River to examine the approaches to Cho Oyu. In 1951 Shipton and Ward had seen the southern side and thought they could see a feasible route. At the same time Murray and Bourdillon had crossed the first saddle to the west of Cho Oyu, the 19,050-foot Nangpa La, and examined the northwest face of the mountain. They also thought a route existed on that side, so we had two possible lines of attack.

We made ourselves comfortable at a small, deserted grazing village at over 15,000 feet. I had a touch of fever but most of the party climbed a nearby peak to examine the southern route to Cho Oyu. They returned disappointed; access to the mountain from the south was going to be difficult, if not impossible. Our only hope was that the route might improve on closer inspection.

We established our Base Camp at a grazing ground covered with winter snow, at an altitude of about 17,000 feet: a cold, desolate spot. The Sherpas, however, thought it was quite satisfactory. They had uncovered a large rock-and-sod hut and Thondup, our cook, appropriated it for his cookhouse. In the dark and smoky atmosphere they crouched around the fire, telling jokes and rocking with deep-chested laughter.

On April 24 we split up into groups and tried various approaches to Cho Oyu. All, however, were unsuccessful, and by the middle of

May Shipton decided that the party should break up into smaller groups and explore and climb where they willed. Shipton himself, with Evans and Gregory, intended to do an exploratory trip to the west. Riddiford had twisted his back and had decided to go home. Finally, Shipton suggested that George and I might like to have a go at crossing for the first time a pass called the Nup La, to the east of Cho Oyu, at the head of the Dudh Kosi River and the Ngojumba glacier. We enthusiastically agreed.

So on May 16 George and I walked the twenty miles down to Namche Bazar, where we were met by Professor Lombard, the geologist of the Swiss Expedition. He told us that the Swiss had battled through the icefall and into the Western Cwm; they had built up a good stock of supplies there and now they were coming to grips with the problem of getting to the South Col. It made our own efforts somehow seem rather paltry and we went quietly off to bed.

ACROSS THE NUP LA

I had always wanted to attempt the Nup La, but quite apart from the satisfaction of making the first ascent of this formidable pass, George and I had other, more secret, plans. We thought that, if we got over the pass, we'd do a quick trip around the north side of Everest, visiting many of the famous places of the early expeditions.

On May 19 we left Namche Bazar and climbed up to the village of Khumjung, where our Sherpas Ang Puta and Tashi Phuta lived. We spent the night in Ang Puta's house and were royally entertained by his charming young wife and his aged parents. A well-to-do Sherpa home is a strongly built, commodious structure of two storeys, with rock walls plastered together with mud. The roof is usually overlapping slabs of pine with great rocks to hold it all down. The ground floor is the storeroom and shelter for the Sherpa's animals, while the family lives on the second floor. George and I crouched by the crackling fire and ate a great repast of omelette and boiled potatoes, followed by a dessert of curds and *tsampa*, the roasted barley flour which is the Sherpas' staple food. Our air mattresses and sleeping bags had been laid out for us in a corner, so we retired to rest after a judicious splashing around of flea powder.

For the next two days our little caravan wound its way slowly up the valley of the Dudh Kosi. In the middle of the second day we

came to a small village where we purchased eighty pounds of potatoes and employed a very attractive young Sherpa girl to carry them. Immediately the whole atmosphere of the party lightened, the Sherpas dashing about like a bunch of colts, seeking to outdo each other with witticisms and laughter. However, although the young men did their best to impress her, none offered to carry part of her considerably heavier load. Amongst the Sherpas a woman expects and receives no favoured treatment when it comes to carrying a load.

Two days later, we were approaching the Nup La. We climbed up beside a glacier and then dropped down a steep moraine wall onto the bare ice. It was surprisingly easy going and we were soon on the far side. We climbed over another steep moraine wall into a trough, which we followed until we came up onto a little crest. We stopped aghast at the view ahead: a great icefall tumbled down thousands of feet in an utter chaos of shattered ice. The icefall was split by a great rock buttress and the ice surged around it like the bow wave of a destroyer. It was a vast and spectacular sight, but I felt completely subdued at the thought of finding a way up it.

We pitched our tent on the ice and paid off all the Sherpas except Ang Puta, Tashi Phuta and Angje. As they disappeared down the glacier, I stood with George and Angje looking up at the icefall. "*Bohut kharab* (very bad), *Sahib!*" said Angje. With the intention of bolstering Sherpa morale I assured him that it was perfectly safe and that we'd find a way up it. Even as I spoke there was a sullen rumble and a hundred yards of ice cliff leaned over and avalanched downwards with frightening force. When the grinding noises had stopped I agreed wholeheartedly that it was indeed "*Bohut kharab!*"

Our meal was cooked over the unusual luxury of a wood fire, as we'd brought a load of dry juniper up with us. As we crouched around it, Angje took a few glowing twigs and placed them on a small flat stone. He added a tiny dab of butter and watched it splutter while he murmured softly to himself. We asked him the meaning of this little ceremony. He explained that it was to propitiate the gods of the ice so that we might have a safe passage. The gift of butter together with the Buddhist prayer *Om Mane Padme Hum* assured us of the kindly attentions of the gods.

Next day, George and I set off at 6:30 am to try a route up a ridge on the left of the mountain. We roped up, fixed our crampons to our boots and started upwards. At first we made quite good progress, but slowly we were forced into the icefall, a crisscross of deep crevasses: a problem, but the sort of job we really liked. We hacked steps up ice

walls, crossed slender snow bridges, cut our way down into crevasses and out the other side. It was exhilarating work and we were making substantial height. We had only one worry. The angle of the crevasses was slowly but surely driving us towards a shattered edge where the icefall took a thousand-foot jump down. But we found a snow bridge and cramponed onto a snowy knoll, and saw in the far distance the Nup La—a gentle dip between 24,000-foot precipices. It was a great moment! We shouted and waved in self-esteem and satisfaction. It was still a long way to the saddle but there didn't seem to be many difficulties in between. We went back down in a glow of contentment. The Sherpas greeted us as cheerfully as usual but there was a certain restraint in the atmosphere when we told them of our plan to take them up the icefall with loads. There was only need for one of us to take them, so George would have the day off. And that night the *Om Mane Padme Hums* reached a new crescendo of feeling, with all three Sherpas joining in.

Next day, we left camp at 6:00 am. We all had substantial loads but the Sherpas were going very well. When we roped up and put our crampons on, the pace dropped off considerably and I heard Angje's familiar "*Bohut kharab!*" as we came to each new and difficult pitch. But it was Tashi Phuta who displayed the least confidence. He poked so many holes in each snow bridge that he reduced their efficiency by at least half. Then he crawled across on his hands and knees. We reached the crest of the icefall at 9:30 am. Confident that there were no difficulties in front of us I walked dreamily on across an easy flat, until I was suddenly stopped by an enormous crevasse. It was at least a hundred feet wide, and it split the icefall from side to side. I looked over the edge ... sixty feet down, the crevasse was bridged with unstable-looking snow—itself split by minor crevasses. It looked a ghastly place but I thought that if we could get down onto the bridge we might get across.

The Sherpas seemed a little reluctant but I made sure they had a good belay and then cut a staircase down the ice wall into the snow-filled bottom, thrust my ice axe firmly into the side of the crevasse as a belay, and then persuaded the Sherpas to follow me down.

I looked across at the other ice wall, which towered sixty feet above us. Banked up against it was a cone of snow which almost reached the top. I warned the Sherpas to keep the rope tight and then I picked my way to it, cut a flight of steps and dug out a platform large enough to stand on comfortably. Then I brought the three Sherpas up and anchored them on this platform. They didn't

say anything but their wide frightened eyes showed they weren't enjoying it much.

I cut another line of steps to the top of the snow and then hacked a route up the ice wall. It wasn't easy. In order to keep on the steps I had to cut out handholds and take all my weight on these. It was a good moment when I reached over the top and thrust my ice axe firmly into the hard snow. A wriggle and a grunt and I was out.

I looked ahead. To my utter disgust another crevasse almost as big as the one I'd just crawled out of barred my way. Where was the nice easy route that George and I had seen? We must have been blind! The faint cry of "*Sahib! Sahib!*" brought me back to my senses, and I hastened back to look down at the three Sherpas clinging to their airy ledge forty feet below. Getting a good, firm stance and placing the rope over my shoulder, I called to them to come on up. Then, like three sacks of coal, I dragged them over the top. They were very glad to be there.

We continued on over some dangerously crevassed country. And the further we went the more there seemed to be between us and the Nup La. We stopped, in the end, on the edge of a great drop which overhung the shattered morass of the righthand icefall. This way was impossible. It might be possible to get round to the left, but I wanted George up here with me before I dared try it. With a feeling of frustration, I led the Sherpas back through the labyrinth of the icefall and down to camp.

We had packed up all our gear and had breakfast by 8:00 am. It was unusually mild, and we didn't like the heavy clouds down the valley. The season was quickly passing—it was now May 27 and we feared the onset of the monsoon.

Having George to help me next morning made a tremendous difference, but some of the snow bridges looked fragile and unsafe. As we reached the crest of the icefall, clouds were rapidly closing in.

We crossed the crevasses somehow and hauled the Sherpas up behind us, and George led off across the murky snow plateau, searching continuously with his ice axe for concealed crevasses. And found them everywhere. We were startled by a sudden shriek from Tashi Phuta and turned to find only his head visible above the snow. Foolishly, he'd strayed from George's track and had found a crevasse for himself. We dragged him out and I peered down the hole he had made, to see green ice disappearing into a black void. I had to stifle a rising feeling of panic. The Sherpas were scared and we couldn't afford to let them see that we were too.

We slowly moved onwards, testing the ground with care. These were the most dangerous and nerve-racking snow conditions that George and I had ever struck. It was now snowing and the visibility shrank as the clouds writhed around us. In desperation we camped on a little snowy knoll, a thoroughly demoralized party.

Next day, I went with the reluctant Sherpas to bring up the rest of our stores. We picked up the loads, then we started back again. I'd hoped that we'd found all the concealed crevasses on our way there, but I hadn't gone fifty feet before I was up to my waist in a new one. By the time I reached the first of the great crevasses I'd had a harrowing time. I was suspicious of the snow in the bottom of the crevasse and made the others stay behind while I investigated. It seemed all right and I stepped carefully forward. Next moment there was a dull whoomp! and the snow I was on sank rapidly, with me, into a crevasse. I threw my legs out. My crampons bit into the ice on the far wall and, with a jar, my shoulders jammed against the near one. The snow bridge boomed down below me into hidden depths. A few seconds later the Sherpas got the rope tight.

Still spanning the crevasse, I shuffled along on my crampons and shoulders until the gap narrowed a little. Mercifully I'd held on to my ice axe. I cut a little ledge in the wall, managed to get a foot onto it and, with a supreme effort, wriggled myself upright, swung my other leg across the crevasse and jammed the steel points hard into the opposite wall. Gasping, I chipped out a little step and moved my foot into it, and there I stood, quite comfortably balanced, with a dark void beneath me and my head only six feet from the surface.

Three feet away was a little snowy ledge. I worked my way along, levered myself onto it, and crawled carefully up. Then, balancing with my ice axe against the other wall of the crevasse, I stood up, my eyes above the edge. I saw three frightened figures spread-eagled on the slopes above—Angje was pulling hard at me; Ang Puta was pulling hard at Angje, and Tashi Phuta, terror written on his face, was pulling frantically at Ang Puta. The three faces broke into enormous smiles and Angje shouted, "*Bohut kharab, Sahib!*"

A strong tug on the rope, a mighty kick from me, and I was out. We returned to camp, but although George's steaming stew did much to soothe frayed nerves we retired to bed depressed and not a little afraid. The Sherpas intoned their prayers half the night.

But to reach the Nup La had become a challenge that George and I found hard to resist. We decided to go on with light loads, the five of us tied onto a single 200-foot length of rope. The further we went

the harder the surface became. We made our way through an extensive area of gaping crevasses which always seemed to force us in the wrong direction; but then we came over a crest and down into a smooth gully which drained into a wide valley. With growing excitement, we saw that the slopes on the far side swept in an almost unbroken easy slope to the Nup La.

It would have taken a lot to stop us now. We cut our way into the ice valley and out again, and raced up the last slopes. "We've made it, George!" We turned and looked back over the chaos of the icefall and found it hard to grasp that we'd managed to get through. That afternoon we camped on a boulder just short of the pass and later George and I climbed up the long easy slopes to the Nup La. There, glowing in the evening sun, was the massive bulk of Everest dominating the horizon. It made our efforts seem worthwhile.

Our next aim was to see its northern slopes, and visit the famous places of the early expeditions. It was beautifully fine next morning when we came down over the Nup La to the smooth West Rongbuk glacier. We made excellent time down it and at ten thirty we were opposite the peak Lingtren Nup. Already we were moving into the country of the early Everest expeditions. And as Everest got closer and closer, we could pick out on its flanks the rock steps, the great couloir All of them so close to the summit!

We camped on the rough moraine just above the glacier, and next day we turned into the East Rongbuk valley—the old pathway to Everest. On the far side of the valley a few stone walls were falling into disrepair. We crossed over to them. This was the famous Camp I. It gave me an eerie feeling to look at it, as though the ghosts of Mallory, Irvine and Smythe were still flitting amongst the ruins. The corroded remnants of an old battery still lay there, but everything else had been destroyed by the weather or transported down to ornament a Tibetan home.

We camped beside a clear glacial pool, and next morning there was Everest again, proud and aloof against a wind-streaked sky, with the East Rongbuk glacier a shining pathway of blue ice sweeping up to its foot. We reached the site of Camp II but could see no sign whatever that anybody had ever lived here. We went up the small Changtse glacier in a strong, cold wind. Our Sherpas told us that they were weak and cold and appealed to us to camp. But we persuaded them to go on. "Only a little further," we said . . . "*Toro! Toro!*" (Little! Little!), they entreated. We found a little snow hollow at nearly 21,000 feet and camped.

We were hoping to attempt Changtse, the north peak of Everest—a wildly optimistic plan since we had neither the equipment nor the forces to do it; but during the night it snowed steadily and next morning more bad weather was obviously brewing. We raced back down the glaciers to the main Rongbuk valley and camped beside the tarn.

Next day, the weather was miserable—driving wind and continual snow. We crossed the Rongbuk glacier but got lost for hours in the ice pinnacles and the enormous mounds of moraine. We camped early, well up the West Rongbuk glacier. Next morning I crawled out of the tent, looked around and called, "Hey, George! Come out and have a look. I don't like it!"

George scrambled out and looked at the heavens. "Let's get out of here! Looks like the end of the world!" Over Nepal the sky was as black as night. Great ugly billows were surging up and writhing about the summits, the most ominous weather sign I had ever seen.

We stirred the Sherpas and started up the glacier almost at a jog trot. It was about six miles to our camp on the far side of the pass—but fear spurred us on. As we reached camp, great, rolling clouds blanketed us and snow was steadily falling. We decided to push on. With all the necessities for a camp on our backs, we moved down into the ice gully and up into the maze of crevasses. We couldn't see anything, but we could hear the dull boom of avalanches. Many of the crevasses had widened and many of our snow bridges had gone, and I often lost our original route. We were exhausted when we reached the bottom of the icefall. To see the moraine again brought tears of relief to our strained eyes. When we decided to camp, the Sherpas wouldn't let us help. Respectfully but firmly they sat us down while they pitched the tent, laid out our sleeping bags and thrust mugs of tea into our hands. We all sat around sipping and laughing like the bunch of comrades that we were. The storm raged on, but we had forgotten it.

THE SWISS ATTACK

For two days we rested beside a little lake near the Ngojumba glacier and ate enormous meals of potatoes and butter and yak curds. But we couldn't keep the old question out of our minds. "How did the Swiss do?" It was now June 5, and they should be coming off

the mountain with their story of success or failure. We decided to go to see them and find out for ourselves.

Between us and the Khumbu glacier was a high pass. On June 6 we moved off and camped at the foot of the pass with snow falling again. Next morning, we started climbing up steep loose rocks, the Sherpas going magnificently, with Tashi Phuta and Ang Puta calmly leading two new recruits like alpine guides. Pemba, one of them, suddenly stopped, and picked something up. Obviously greatly excited he showed it to his friend, Ang Pemba. I asked them what it was all about. They placed in my hand a tuft of long black hairs. Thick and coarse, they looked like bristles. "*Yeti, Sahib! Yeti!*" I couldn't help being impressed by their conviction, and it did seem a strange place to find hair. We were well over 19,000 feet and the "Abominable Snowman" was obviously no mean rock climber. I showed it to George and we decided that it would be quite an achievement to bring back for scientific examination the hair of the Abominable Snowman. But, scenting our intentions, Pemba snatched the tuft away and threw it far over the bluff. "*Bohut kharab, Sahib! Bohut kharab!*"

We crossed the pass and reached the Swiss Base Camp. Only some faint remaining warmth in the ashes of a fire showed signs of recent life. The glacier was deserted and so was the icefall. The Swiss had gone! They had been a very strong party and a very confident one. Had they been able to do it?

We had to go a long way the next day before we met a human being. Just outside the village of Phalong Karpo we found an old Sherpa watching his grazing yaks. Ang Puta chattered in Sherpa with him and then gave us the news. "*Sahib!* He says that seven Swiss climbers reached the summit!" My heart sank into my boots, and then I looked at the doddering old man and wondered... Seven sounded rather a lot. For the first time I admitted to myself that I didn't want the Swiss to climb Everest. Let them get very high—good luck to them in that—but not to the summit! I wanted that left for a British party.

We were very quiet as we went down the valley to the village of Pangboche, where we were welcomed into a fine home. A huge plate of boiled potatoes was placed in front of us, which we attacked with vigour. Then we heard a clattering of boots outside and next moment Shipton burst into the room. We jumped to our feet, asking, "What about the Swiss?"

"Lambert and Tenzing reached 28,000 feet. But they didn't get to the top!" Admiration—but also relief—chased through my mind. Everest was still unclimbed. . . .

Shipton sat down in front of another plate of potatoes and we all talked furiously. Shipton wanted us to come with him to the Indian border by an unexplored route. It was too good a trip to miss, but we'd promised Ang Puta and Tashi Phuta a good rest at their homes. Ang Puta was my personal Sherpa and we had built up a strong tie of affection. I made it quite clear to him that he could return home if he wished but his reply was immediate: "If the Sahib goes . . . I go!"

I went to Namche Bazar that afternoon to see to our gear. The rest of our party were there, preparing to return to India. Later on in the evening I visited the Swiss camp.

They had a fascinating story to tell, but were obviously weary and dispirited. Instead of using the Lhotse glacier route suggested by Shipton, they had followed a steep rock and snow ridge they called the Geneva Spur. An enforced night out without anywhere to pitch their tents had sapped their strength and they had reached the South Col in an exhausted condition. But they still had plenty of courage. The guide, Lambert, and the Sherpa leader, Tenzing, had struggled upwards and established a camp at 27,000 feet. They had no sleeping bags, and no effective means of melting snow for water, but they spent the night there and in the morning dragged themselves slowly up the ridge. Their oxygen sets had proved difficult to operate and at a height of about 28,000 feet these two fine climbers were too exhausted to go any further and only barely struggled back to their camp and safety.

The strain of high altitude showed in all their faces. All they wanted at the moment was the peace and comfort of home. I didn't get the chance to meet Tenzing—he was away doing some task—but I went back to my tent with my mind swimming with the courage and daring of these men.

I rejoined Shipton and Lowe who had recruited a large group of women and children to carry our gear, as all the men were carrying loads for the Swiss.

In the next ten days we crossed to the Hongu valley and there met up with Evans and his two Sherpas, and then we went up to the Barun plateau, a high unexplored ice field. In two glorious days we climbed three fine peaks. Then the monsoon struck in earnest when we were camped at the head of the glacier, and we knew our climbing for the season was finished.

We descended into the Barun valley and came into a paradise of flowers. There were acres of blazing red rhododendrons, and tiny blossoms of every colour were bursting through the soil. We were in a world of rain—hundreds of waterfalls drifted gracefully down the mighty rock bluffs of the valley—and the heavy clouds would only split for a moment to reveal some startling summit before closing in again. It was the most beautiful valley I had ever seen, and I knew I would never forget its rugged beauty.

Now Shipton was filled with a fiery sense of urgency. He wanted to return to England as soon as possible to help organize the 1953 British attack on Everest. Driving our porters hard, we crossed a 14,000-foot pass and plunged dizzily downwards into the heat and leeches of the Arun River. Tracks were overgrown, bridges were washed away, and the paths were deep in water and mud. But we plugged onwards and on June 23 reached the main path back to India.

On arrival we were told that the Swiss planned to throw another powerful attempt onto Everest in the autumn. Lambert was to be in charge of the actual attack on the mountain and Tenzing was to be the Sherpa chief. To our prejudiced minds it almost seemed unsporting. They'd had a fair go . . . why didn't they give us a chance now? But after all, Swiss prestige was at stake, and in similar circumstances we'd have done the same ourselves.

Shipton flew off to England and when I finally arrived home in Auckland I found a letter from him waiting for me. He had agreed to lead the 1953 British attempt on Everest and he wanted George Lowe, Harry Ayres and myself to join his party. Nothing could have stimulated more my interest in the second Swiss attempt. News was slow in coming but finally we heard that they'd failed again! They'd carried tons of stores up the Western Cwm, and hacked a route up the Lhotse glacier, as recommended by Shipton. After tremendous efforts they had established several camps on this great face and ultimately reached the South Col. But they'd left their attack until too late. Winter was approaching, and the bitter cold and strong winds drove them down.

The Swiss parties had been well equipped—they had with them this time a greatly improved oxygen set—and well organized, and yet they had failed. If we were to have any chance of success, our expedition would need a high degree of technical skill, the best in modern equipment and oxygen, and first-class organization. More than anything else, it would need its share of luck.

EVEREST 1953-THE FIRST BARRIER

Everest Expedition Office,
October 16, 1952.

Dear Hillary,

I believe that Eric Shipton has written to tell you about the change in the leadership of the 1953 Everest Expedition. . . . You must be feeling puzzled and disappointed that this should have come to pass, it is most unfortunate that it should have happened in this way, and very bad luck on Eric Shipton.

However, you will, I am sure, agree with me that . . . we must go ahead with the planning with a firm determination to get to the top.

. . . I am busy with the selection of the party and hope that you and Lowe will be ready to join it; the proposed team will be approved by the Himalayan Joint Committee at the end of this month. . . . Don't be too disappointed if we cannot take more of your contingent. You will appreciate that it is very difficult to finalize the list; in principle I regard it as very important indeed to have met the individuals before making a final choice. . . .

Yours sincerely,
John Hunt

I already knew of the committee's decision to change leaders in midstream and felt tremendously disappointed that Shipton was being superseded. "And who *is* this chap Hunt?" I thought. "I wonder if he's any good?"

Evidence of Hunt's calibre was not long in appearing, for the post brought a series of detailed plans which I reluctantly had to admit seemed to hit the nail on the head every time. Lowe and I were pleased indeed to hear of the inclusion in the party of Evans, Bourdillon and Gregory, who had all been on the Cho Oyu Expedition, and Ward of the 1951 reconnaissance. The climbing team also included Wylie and Noyce, both with excellent Himalayan records; and Michael Westmacott and George Band, who had done some fine climbing in Europe. The non-climbing members were our movie cameraman, Tom Stobart, and an old friend, Dr. Griffiths Pugh of the Cho Oyu Expedition. Organization was going ahead at great speed and our equipment was to be the best that could be obtained. This was going to be an oxygen attack, and two different types of sets were being developed for our use.

The expedition gathered in Katmandu in the early days of March, and I met John Hunt for the first time. I was immediately impressed by his dynamic energy, his ability and his charm. I thought he summed up his own character very well when he told me that he intended to "lead the expedition from the front". Here, too, I met Tenzing for the first time. Of strong and sturdy build, he had a quiet air of confidence and a charming smile.

On March 10, 1953, we started a leisurely march to the foot of Everest across the lovely Nepalese countryside. We swam in the rivers, ate enormous meals and slept out under the stars. By the time we reached the monastery of Thyangboche we were a very fit party and a very happy one.

It was a tremendous thrill to see once again the great bulk of Everest thrusting high over the Nuptse-Lhotse wall. We set up a temporary Base Camp at Thyangboche, unpacked our equipment and spent some days testing it, with Bourdillon giving us valuable instruction in the use of our various forms of oxygen apparatus. Our plan was to get accustomed to the higher altitudes by exploration and climbing trips in the glaciated valleys around Everest. Our first acclimatization period was from March 30 until April 6. We split into smaller groups and disappeared into different valleys. When we regrouped at Thyangboche, all of us had climbed peaks of around 20,000 feet and we'd carried out some useful exploration. Altogether it had proved a very satisfactory start.

It was a great thrill for me when Hunt asked me to take Michael Westmacott, George Band and George Lowe up the Khumbu glacier to reconnoitre the icefall into the Western Cwm—a tough job. Dr. Pugh and the cameraman, Stobart, decided to come along with us.

On the morning of April 9, the six of us set off from Thyangboche accompanied by five high-altitude Sherpas and thirty-nine Sherpa coolies, about half of them women. Threatening skies spurred us on to greater effort and we camped at the deserted village of Phalong Karpo in a flurry of snow.

We awoke next morning to a white world. We were all keen to get up the valley and attack the icefall without delay, but our coolies had no snow glasses. If we went on I was afraid they might become snow-blind. However, our Sherpas reassured me that the coolies were not the slightest bit concerned. "After all, this is their own country; they should know how to look after themselves" was the argument I used to quell my uneasy conscience. We walked up the valley into a fairyland of snow crystals shimmering in the sun. In childlike

exuberance, I threw handfuls into the air, just to see it twinkle. We turned into the Khumbu valley and started climbing in snow almost a foot deep. The glare was intense and all those with snow glasses put them on. I could see the rest of our porters squinting painfully in the strong light.

With a sinking heart I berated myself for allowing impatience to overrule my common sense, but decided to push on hard; the sooner we reached our destination the better. We intended spending the night at Lobuje, a little group of rock and sod shelters in the grassy trough beside the Khumbu glacier. I reached there first and watched the sorry party arriving with swollen, weeping eyes. I sank into the depths of depression and, convinced that the whole party would be completely blind for a week, I went morosely to bed.

But I had seriously misjudged the recuperative powers of our Sherpas. In the morning only four of them wished to be paid off and these only because they were too blind to see at all. The remainder were bleary-eyed but willing. It was obviously impossible to let them start out again without some form of protection, and the resourceful Stobart came to our rescue. To someone with his vast experience of photographing charging lions in Africa and crashing icebergs in the Antarctic, this problem was small stuff. Some of the party had large skiing goggles with spare celluloid lenses. Stobart collected these and proceeded to cut them into small pieces. He then produced a large roll of black adhesive tape and some string, and before long a prototype pair of goggles had emerged. It was an immediate success and the whole party set to work with scissors and adhesive tape to produce nearly thirty pairs.

When we started off, the morning was well advanced and the glare considerable. I soon realized that some of the Sherpas were in worse condition than they had admitted. One girl seemed almost blind but plodded determinedly on with her hand on the Sherpa in front to show her the way. I decided to send her down. I took her load off her back and pressed her wages into her hand, but with a wild gesture she threw the money into the snow, picked up her load and stumbled off after her companions. As I knelt in the snow searching for the coins I reflected that the women here seemed just as illogical as their sisters back home.

After several hours of steady plodding, we reached a tributary glacier and started across it. Snow was falling, and George Lowe and I pushed on ahead. We came at long last to the end of the moraine and crossed a snow-covered flat to a campsite beside a lake.



John Hunt, leader of the expedition. Aged 42, he had been climbing for more than twenty-five years and had taken part in three Himalayan expeditions.

Edmund Hillary with (left) **Charles Evans**. Evans, aged 33, was at that time a surgeon in Liverpool but had found time to take part in three Himalayan expeditions in the preceding three years.

Some of the stronger Sherpas weren't far behind us, but many others hadn't come into view. George and I went back to give a hand. I found one of the women floundering in the snow under a box weighing over seventy pounds. She was almost exhausted and I took her load from her. She had carried it with a headband and as I had no pack frame with me I had to follow suit. My progress at first was erratic but I soon learned to balance the load, and in this fashion we had the last Sherpa and his load in camp by dark. In the dim light and falling snow our campsite presented a miserable picture, but soon fires sprang up under every overhanging boulder and the smell of cooking food and the hearty laughs of the Sherpas brought an air of tired contentment.

We woke to a beautiful morning and as we ate our breakfast we couldn't keep our eyes off the wonderful fluted ice of Nuptse, which towered above us. Today we intended to establish our Base Camp and get our first look at the icefall. We were soon on the Khumbu glacier, and at last reached the clear ice in the middle and followed up an easy trough between the great ice pinnacles. Floating high above us, almost so far as to be unreal, was the grim, black summit pyramid of Everest with its tattered banner of wind-whipped snow streaming out into thin air.

By midday we had reached the site of the Swiss Base Camp—a rock-strewn expanse of ice with enough flat places to pitch a few tents. George Lowe found a magnificent pile of juniper wood



Tom Bourdillon was a well built, 28-year-old physicist. He had accompanied Shipton on the Reconnaissance and the Cho Oyu expeditions.



George Lowe, aged 28, a friend and compatriot of Hillary's, had also been in the Cho Oyu team. A schoolteacher, he was expert in ice techniques.



Wilfred Noyce, a 34-year-old schoolmaster and author, was a leading British mountaineer with a fine climbing record.

nearby—enough to keep our fires going for a week. With some regret we paid off our Sherpa coolies and watched them dash gaily down the glacier. They'd been a game bunch and we were sorry to see them go.

Late in the afternoon, determined that if it were humanly possible we'd get to the top of the icefall before Hunt's arrival, I set off to find an easy route to its foot. Above our Base Camp the Khumbu glacier was a wilderness of ice pinnacles penetrated by winding hollows. I followed up one of these hollows until I emerged an hour later at the foot of the icefall. I couldn't see a great deal, for the clouds had closed in, but I realized that the lower portion of the icefall was considerably more difficult than it had been in 1951. A route still looked possible, however. I decided that next day we'd put a camp as high as we could up the lower slopes.

Next morning George Lowe, unfortunately, was ill, but Westmacott and Band looked fit and strong. At 9:00 am, the three of us, together with four Sherpas, set off in warm sunshine through the ice pinnacles. The whole icefall was clearly revealed and the closer we got to it the more depressing it became. Even the lower portions were split by innumerable crevasses and menaced by crumbling ice towers. There was no point in attempting to establish a camp, so we sent our Sherpas with all the equipment back to base, while Band, Westmacott and I set off to reconnoitre a route. Roped together we worked our way over to the left side of the icefall, looking for a route



Charles Wylie, aged 32, was an officer with the Gurkhas. A superb planner and organizer, he had good Alpine and Himalayan climbing experience.



Alfred Gregory, aged 39, was a Blackpool travel agent. Small and tough, he had considerable experience, including the Cho Oyu expedition.



Michael Westmacott, was aged 27. He had no Himalayan experience but had a fine record of climbing in the Alps.

that could be safely crossed by laden porters. The first large crevasses had substantial ice bridges spanning them, but their angles forced us slowly to the right and ultimately we were brought to a halt at the foot of an ice wall.

Mike Westmacott was leading. He attacked this problem with vigour, cutting a line of steps across to the lefthand side where the wall was split by a crevasse. He then chopped a series of steps up the steep icy corner. Finally, he reached the top and pulled himself out of sight. Moments later a hearty call told us he had a good safe stance and that we could come on up. Band followed up slowly. Another yell, and I started up. It was steep and very exposed; on the left side I could look straight down fifty or sixty feet into the depths of a crevasse. This pitch became generally known as "Mike's Horror". Later parties attached a fixed rope to the section so that the porters could get up safely.

I took over the lead, making every effort to bear left amongst a maze of crevasses. Many of the bridges we crossed were frail slivers of ice quite unsuitable for our porters, but they could be improved later. After half an hour, I came to the edge of the largest crevasse we'd struck yet. It was about forty feet across and enormously deep. I searched anxiously for a way across or around it. The only possibility I could see was a great chunk of ice which was jammed insecurely across the crevasse just below the top. It looked as if a decent push would send it crashing into the depths, but I thought it



Michael Ward, aged 27, was the expedition doctor and responsible for the health of the whole team. He was also a fine climber.



George Band at 23 was the youngest of the team and had only just come down from Cambridge. He had a good Alpine climbing record.



Dr. Griffiths Pugh, a non-climbing member of the team, did valuable work in mountain physiology.

was worth a try. Mike anchored me firmly with the rope and I started cautiously over. I was sure I could feel it quivering and even when I reached the far side I wasn't out of trouble. The upper lip of the crevasse was much higher than the bridge and I had a twenty-foot ice wall to climb. From my insecure perch I started cutting large steps in the hard ice and then nicked out some small handholds. Then I climbed up onto the bottom steps and, holding on like grim death with one hand, swung out over the crevasse. I went on cutting with my free hand, working my way slowly up the wall. It was a great relief when I was able to stretch my arm over the lip of the crevasse and drive my ice axe into the good snow. A wriggle and I was up; and so "Hillary's Horror" was born. We never liked this place and it was only used a few times before a safer route was found to the left.

We resumed the familiar pattern through the crevasses ahead—a wild leap if it wasn't too wide, or an anxious search for a bridge that would hold our weight. Finally we came to a little snowy saddle and sat down for rest and food. We looked at the route ahead. From here on, the whole nature of the icefall changed. The slopes ahead were much steeper and were formed of great unstable blocks of ice stacked insecurely on top of each other. Remnants of shattered ice strewn the snow below gave evidence that any sudden move in the glacier would send some of the blocks tumbling down. The only possible route I could see was up a steep gully, and even this was menaced by

overhanging ice. We started off with a rush, whacking steps up the ice slopes, our one wish to get out of the danger area as quickly as possible. At the top of the gully we struck out of it to the right and climbed up onto a large block that seemed a little more stable than the rest. We looked back down "Hell-fire Alley", thanking our lucky stars that we were safely out of it.

But the route ahead didn't look much better. It was just a jumble of ice blocks. I started ferreting a route between, over and, on a few occasions, almost underneath them. It was nerve-racking work and progress was slow. The Swiss had established a camp a couple of hundred yards ahead where the icefall had flattened out, but the terrain before it looked quite impossible. Tired, and not a little scared, we made our way back to Base Camp.

Next day Westmacott and I renewed the attack, accompanied by a Sherpa called Ang Namgyal—a safe and steady climber. We climbed back up our tracks, reaching "Hell-fire Alley" without a great deal of trouble. Here, however, we had an unpleasant shock awaiting us. About twenty feet of our track had been wiped out by shattered ice blocks that had fallen from higher up during the night. Every block perched above our heads took on a new malevolence and we hurried to the top with chills running down our spines. We crossed through the maze of ice blocks and now faced up to the task of getting a bit further than the previous day. We tried a long swing to the right, but we were effectively stopped a hundred yards into the icefall by an immense transverse crevasse. We returned to our starting place.

Just to the right of us there were two great blocks of ice forty or fifty feet high, and it struck me that if we could get through between them we might make a little progress. I started cutting a line of steps up their glistening sides, making little handholds in the ice for balance. A long stretch at the top, a quick changing of weight, and I was through. I took a quick look ahead and shouted the glad news that some progress was possible. The others climbed up and, with growing excitement, we negotiated half a dozen ice blocks. Then we stopped in astonishment at the terrain ahead. There appeared to have been an enormous subsidence in the middle of the icefall; below us a wide, shallow gully swept through icy ruins up to the broad ledge which was our first objective. The floor of the gully was split into a jigsaw puzzle of crevasses like a pattern of sun-baked mud. It looked terribly unstable—as though it could sink again at any moment.

With a familiar tightening of my nerves, I started investigations.

Westmacott had me on a tight rope, so I dislodged a large piece of ice and pushed it down a crevasse. For a moment nothing occurred, but then a muffled roar came from the subterranean depths and a distinct tremor shot through the whole area. It seemed a bit shaky, but I decided to push on. Although we finally got across them, I didn't like the way the first few crevasses shivered and boomed with every blow of the ice axe.

I stepped onto the first piece of the jigsaw puzzle and was relieved to find that it felt fairly stable, although there was evidence of recent movement. On we went, stepping over small crevasses until the gully narrowed. It was a gloomy spot. On either side were great ice walls and a threatening finger of ice stretched out above our heads. We gathered all our strength and leaped across the last two crevasses onto a sunny open shelf.

We were now more than halfway up the icefall at a height of about 19,400 feet. We started looking around for a campsite. The shelf was extensive, but there were few places that weren't in some danger of avalanches from above. Finally we found a suitable spot on a small ice rib. Only a short distance behind it was an enormous tilting sérac, a great pinnacle of ice, but we estimated that, even if it did topple over, it wouldn't give us anything more than a bad fright. After a brief halt for lunch we started down again to improve the track. In an orgy of ice-cutting, steps were hacked in the ice at tricky points, overhanging ice was chopped away, and a safe route was carved down steep ice slopes and over difficult ice blocks. We returned to Base Camp in a glow of virtue.

That evening we had a long discussion. Although we had established a route well up in the icefall, I was far from happy about its dangers. Our job was to find a route that would subject our porters to no unnecessary hazards. We decided that next day we'd see if we could find a safer route up the middle of the icefall.

We had hardly settled down to sleep when Mike became violently ill with vomiting. It was obvious that he was going to be out of action for a few days, and we suspected that the unaccustomed altitude had caught up with him at last. Fortunately, George Lowe had by now recovered, so our climbing strength could be maintained.

Lowe, George Band and I set off early in the morning for the centre section of the icefall. We reached the foot without difficulty and examined the possibilities ahead. For some distance the icefall climbed up rather steeply, but it was in a far less shattered condition than our other route on the left. Band and Lowe set to work chipping

long flights of steps, and we gained height rapidly. On either side of us the slopes were lined with teetering séracs, and we took care to keep well out of their line of fire. We had just climbed onto the crest of an ice bump when, with frightening suddenness and speed, a sérac only fifty feet to our right split in half and swept past us in a grinding mass of ice blocks. It was becoming obvious that this route, despite its promising start, was going to peter out, and without further ado we headed down to camp. The route on the left, with all its dangers, was the only possible one.

Back at base we crawled into our warm sleeping bags, and I was almost drifting off to sleep when the flaps of the tent parted, a cheerful Sherpa face appeared, and I was handed a note from the "*Burra Sahib*". Apparently John Hunt was already camping down at the lake with Noyce and Ward, days ahead of schedule. This information filled us with consternation, for we had set our hearts on reaching the top of the icefall before he turned up. We decided to push ahead and establish Camp II.

Lowe, Band and I, with Pugh and Stobart, were away at nine thirty next morning, with three Sherpas to carry some of our gear. Stobart was determined to get some good coloured movies, so for a while he directed us with good effect, and "Mike's Horror" and "Hillary's Horror" became the authentic location for some gripping scenes of battling with death and destruction.

We finally tired of this diversion and set off up the mountain. By its very familiarity, the route now appeared a good deal easier and safer; even "Hell-fire Alley" looked calm and peaceful under its layer of fresh snow. But the Sherpas were making very hard work of the ascent and missed no opportunity of telling us how much more dangerous it was than in the previous year with the Swiss party. However, with frequent rests and a good deal of persuasive talking, we managed to keep them going.

George Lowe was in the lead as we approached the "Atom Bomb" area. When he came to the first crevasse he stopped and eyed it with obvious dislike. "You didn't cross this bridge did you, Ed?" he shouted. I assured him that we had. Unconvinced, he gave it a jab with his ice axe. To his astonishment—and mine—the bridge suddenly dropped out of sight and a moment later the whole area shook with a fierce tremor. When everything quietened down, I felt George's accusing eye on me so, guiltily muttering something about "heavy-handed shoves that would knock the Sydney Harbour Bridge over," I started off to find another place to get across the crevasse.

Fifty feet to the left, I found a more substantial bridge. We crossed it cautiously and rejoined the old route, then continued across the jigsaw puzzle of the "Atom Bomb" area. In our two-day absence a marked change had taken place in it—some blocks had dropped a few feet and others had been forced up—but it was still possible to step from one to another. The final crevasses seemed to have widened; it was impossible to jump them with a load on, so I took my pack off and leaped across. George Lowe tied the loads onto a line and threw the end over to me. I pulled them in hand over hand. We belayed the Sherpas carefully from both sides and persuaded them to jump over too. Before long we had all the gear on our campsite and were chipping a level platform for the tents. Then we conducted the Sherpas back over the last two crevasses, and Pugh and Stobart got them safely back to Base Camp.

Lowe, Band and I settled down in our two small tents. We soon had our cooker going and were sniffing contentedly as the aroma of chicken soup wafted through the air. Later, we crawled out to find that three or four inches of snow had fallen. It was very cold and still, but if you stood quietly for a moment your ear attuned itself to the hidden life of the glacier: a soft creak or a sharp snap; a faint crash as a distant sérac tumbled to its doom; a sudden roar as an avalanche swept off the hanging ice cliffs of Nuptse. And always in the background there was a roar like surf breaking on the shore—and you knew that the wind was playing its wild tune amongst the summit rocks of Everest.

It was bitterly cold when we woke in the morning. We ate breakfast, tied our crampons on, and roped up. The way ahead looked extremely difficult, for from here on the nature of the icefall changed completely. Below Camp II few of the ice blocks had been more than thirty feet high, but above us they were enormous—square cut, with cliffs a hundred feet high. They surged over the crest of the Cwm and, like great icebergs, ground their way slowly and relentlessly to the bottom. The only way was to try to climb up between them, clambering over the shattered ice at their feet, and keeping clear of the overhanging bulges which periodically split from their sides and devastated the slopes beneath.

We climbed up a steep gully, emerging at the foot of the first ice cliff. We eyed it with considerable trepidation, for it was obviously very much alive—the steep slope in front was littered with splinters of ice, a good deal of it of recent origin. The only way to get past this cliff was to traverse along this slope to the right. We clambered

quickly along, trying to keep a large lump of ice between us and the threat from above. At the end of the slope, we dropped down into a snowy hollow for a rest, since Band was acclimatizing rather slowly and was making heavy weather of it.

The one route out of this hollow led over the top of a steep tilting sérac. With a resigned shrug I headed for it. Half a dozen steps up and I was on top, with a drop a few feet to the right. Wasting no time, I crossed to the crevasse which divided the sérac from the more stable ground above. On either side of the crevasse I cut a comfortable platform and then stepped easily across.

George Lowe now took over the lead. He'd only gone a few yards when he stopped, looking ahead. Then he waved us up to him. "This is the worst yet" was my immediate thought as I looked over the edge, for the next hundred feet was split by innumerable crevasses, jagged and fresh, and menaced on every side by poised ice blocks or undercut séracs. There was a brief silence. "Well, we can only give it a go," said George, and for the next half hour his ice axe was going unceasingly as he cut a trail around, in between and over the crevasses. The last crevasse was the worst of the lot. The ice on either side of it was loose and unstable, with a pile of blocks perched insecurely above. The only way across was a thin sliver of ice which projected weakly out into the middle. George was understandably reluctant to use it. "Go on, George!" I yelled, with the courage that comes from being on the far end of the rope. "I've a first-class belay." George sent one scathing glance behind him, then simply flew over the crevasse—I don't think he was on the piece of ice long enough for it to break. Then he brought the two of us across on a tight rope. This sliver of ice served satisfactorily for a week or so until the two-hundred-and-ten-pound Tom Bourdillon came along. Tom was immensely strong and we often heard his puzzled comment that something had "just come apart" in his hands. Tom approached this bridge and gave it a "slight shove" with his ice axe to test its stability—whereupon, shaken to the core, it gave up the ghost and disappeared silently into the depths of the crevasse. After that we had to bridge it properly with an aluminium ladder. George Lowe and I always called this place the "Ghastly Crevasse", and that pretty well summed up our feelings towards it.

Ahead of us was a vast series of ice cliffs. They looked absolutely hopeless. For the next hour, while the cold hand of fear gripped our stomachs, George Lowe led us through a purgatory of fractured ice, but always another ice wall turned us back. We had almost given up

when, cramponing up steep slopes and forcing a track amongst fallen séracs, we finally emerged on the crest of a little snowy saddle, and sat down for a rest.

I suddenly felt a surge of excitement. "Hey, chaps! That's the edge of the Cwm up there. If we can get up that cliff we're right!" But the cliff looked as impossible as all the rest of them. "Perhaps it's better round the corner," I said in desperation. We set to work to cross the usual conglomeration of ice blocks and crevasses. With a slash of my ice axe I knocked a lump of ice out of the way and it fell into a crevasse. Next moment the ground quivered and shook. "Another shaky patch," I called back. "You'd better let the full rope out."

At the corner our way was blocked by a series of small séracs. George tried to make his way over the top, but with each blow of his ice axe they moved visibly, so we decided it wasn't worth it. Right on the corner were two long thin slivers of ice standing upright, with a gap of a couple of feet between them. I looked through and could see reasonable terrain on the other side. But if those ice slivers came together when you were between them . . . Well, you'd know what a nut felt like in a nutcracker! I mentally shrugged, and started cutting steps on each wall. The ice rang hollowly, but the slivers didn't move. I climbed inside them and went on cutting. Soon I was able to drag myself to safer ground. I took in the rope and the others hastily followed me through.

The ice wall ahead was lower, but I couldn't see a break anywhere in its defences. I started along the bottom of the cliffs, examining them closely. Ahead of me an ice buttress leaned lazily against the cliff. It ran out against the vertical face, but my interest quickened when I saw that the top part of the face was split by a vertical crack—the end of a crevasse. If I could get inside that crevasse I might scratch a route up to the top. Lowe and Band agreed it was our only chance.

Cutting a track up the steep buttress, I reached the top and pressed against the cold wall. I didn't like the look of the next few steps. The bulging ice would be thrusting me out almost beyond the limits of balance, and there was a long drop underneath. But if I could get one of the other chaps up onto the buttress to belay me with the rope, I might give it a go. I managed to jam my ice axe firmly between the buttress and the wall and looped the rope around it. It seemed quite a good belay. Band started moving slowly up the steps and I took in the rope. He soon was able to jam his ice axe in beside mine and loop the rope firmly around it. I reached over

carefully and cut a step inside the crack on one of the walls. Then, without stopping to think I stepped quickly round the bulge and into the gloom of the crevasse—into a world of soft green light and cold slippery walls. I looked up. The top was only twelve feet above me. I cut a line of steps in each wall and the ice chips tinkled merrily down into the depths below. Wriggling and straining, with a foot against each wall, I climbed up onto the steps and cut some more. Next moment I had an arm over the edge and a few seconds later I was out. With a yell of relief and pleasure I called to the others to come on up. I couldn't see them, but as I took in the rope I could follow their progress by the subterranean noises they were making. Finally they both popped up above the crevasse.

We stood looking round us. There was no doubt about it—we were on the edge of the Western Cwm. The block on which we were standing was connected to the area above by an excellent snow bridge. With renewed energy we charged across it, climbed a small slope and stood looking down into a pleasant snowy hollow. It was the ideal spot for Camp III—safe and with plenty of room.

We returned down the icefall in a glow of excitement and looked with scorn on its dangers. As we dropped down the last gully towards Camp II, we could see the tents; to our surprise there were two figures standing beside them. We hurried on down to find John Hunt and Ang Namgyal. It was good to see them, and Hunt was tremendously pleased at our news, although far from happy at the dangerous nature of the route. I took him back as far as the "Ghastly Crevasse" to give him some idea of what it was like, and then we rejoined the others at the camp.

I didn't envy John Hunt his task of deciding whether we should use this route for porters. It certainly had its dangers, but George Lowe and I were convinced it was the only way. Hunt emphasized that we must spare no effort to reduce its dangers to a minimum. We all roped up and carrying our personal gear started down to Base Camp feeling tired but well satisfied.

THE SECOND BARRIER

In his carefully planned scheme of acclimatization, Hunt had allowed for rest periods at lower altitudes after a spell of hard work. Some of us didn't feel like a rest, but Hunt wisely insisted that we take it. So we all descended to the Swiss Base Camp, and spent

several days resting, writing letters and mending our gear. Then we returned to the attack.

Our first task was to make the icefall route safe for our porters. Long pine poles had been brought up from the valleys and these, together with sections of our aluminium ladder, were used to bridge the more difficult crevasses. Fixed ropes were placed on "Mike's Horror" and "Hillary's Horror", and some of the more threatening of the séracs were cut away. But, despite all this work, the route never really became either easy or safe. Daily falls of snow continually wiped out the tracks, and the "Atom Bomb" area, in constant movement, usually managed overnight to provide a new crevasse or widen an existing one.

Meanwhile, Mike Westmacott and I established Camp III, and from it we improved the route along the upper icefall. We fixed a long rope ladder over the lowest part of the east ice cliff, and put a fixed rope through the "Nutcracker". One evening, just to show how well acclimatized he was, Mike produced a *Times* crossword puzzle and proceeded to work the whole thing out—a feat I could not have emulated even at sea level.

Although Camp III was at the entrance to the Western Cwm, we were still cut off from the Cwm by an enormous crevasse—the one we had stopped at in 1951 and the same one which had given the Swiss trouble in 1952. We couldn't find any bridge over it, but in one place it was only fifteen feet wide, which meant that we could probably bridge it with a ladder. On the morning of April 25, Mike and I tried to force a route through the crevasse, but it was too hazardous and difficult for laden porters.

That afternoon, a big party arrived—Hunt, Evans, Noyce, Gregory and Tenzing, together with a large number of Sherpas. It was the first big lift up the icefall and also Tenzing's first trip above Base Camp this year. I asked him what he thought of the route and he seemed quite happy about it. A large camp was quickly erected, then Mike led all the extra porters back down to Base Camp. It started snowing heavily, but by four o'clock it was clear and cold. Hunt immediately suggested we use the rest of the day in bridging the great crevasse. Hunt, Evans, Noyce, Tenzing and I set off across the soft new snow carrying three six-foot aluminium ladders. At the crevasse we bolted them together and then lowered the eighteen-foot ladder carefully into place. It spanned with a couple of feet to spare, but it seemed a frail link across the deep gash. Despite the late hour,

back to answer the five o'clock radio call from Base Camp, so Wilfrid Noyce reluctantly returned accompanied by Tenzing.

Hunt crawled across the bridge, and Charles Evans and I followed him. Our main aim was to find a route leading into the centre of the Western Cwm, away from the avalanches that frequently swept from the glaciers on the west shoulder of Everest. But we found we were slowly being forced towards the glaciers. Crevasse followed crevasse, but all had substantial snow bridges—all, that is, except one, and Hunt, not in the mood to be stopped, cut a line of steps down it and out again on the other side. We were now close under Everest and our way to the right was barred by impossible crevasses. The only escape was to pass close by the cliffs before heading into the Cwm and out of danger. Hunt didn't hesitate. He plunged on over avalanche snow and then shot to the right. I didn't really feel happy until the hanging ice was well behind us, but Hunt's enthusiasm was infectious and we pushed on rapidly. Ahead of us the Lhotse Face and the South Col were becoming exciting realities ... another challenge to meet, and another defence to shatter. We swept on, feeling like giants as we strode up the Western Cwm, until common sense finally called a halt, for night was fast approaching. Ahead of us there seemed to be no obvious problems, so with a feeling of jubilation we turned back. In the soft evening light the great peaks around us glowed like fire against the dark velvet sky. It was a fitting finish to an exciting day.

April 26 dawned fine and clear. Hunt, Evans, Tenzing and I were to go ahead and complete the route as far as the site of the Swiss Camp IV. Noyce and Gregory were to follow behind with half a dozen laden Sherpas. Hunt and Evans tied onto one rope and Tenzing and I onto another. It was the first time I had climbed with Tenzing, and I was very interested to watch him in action. Tenzing was obviously viewing the day's activity with considerable enthusiasm, as up to this time he had been confined to Base Camp, helping to organize his Sherpas. Hunt and Evans led off, and wasted no time in passing under the threatening cliffs of Everest and out into the Western Cwm.

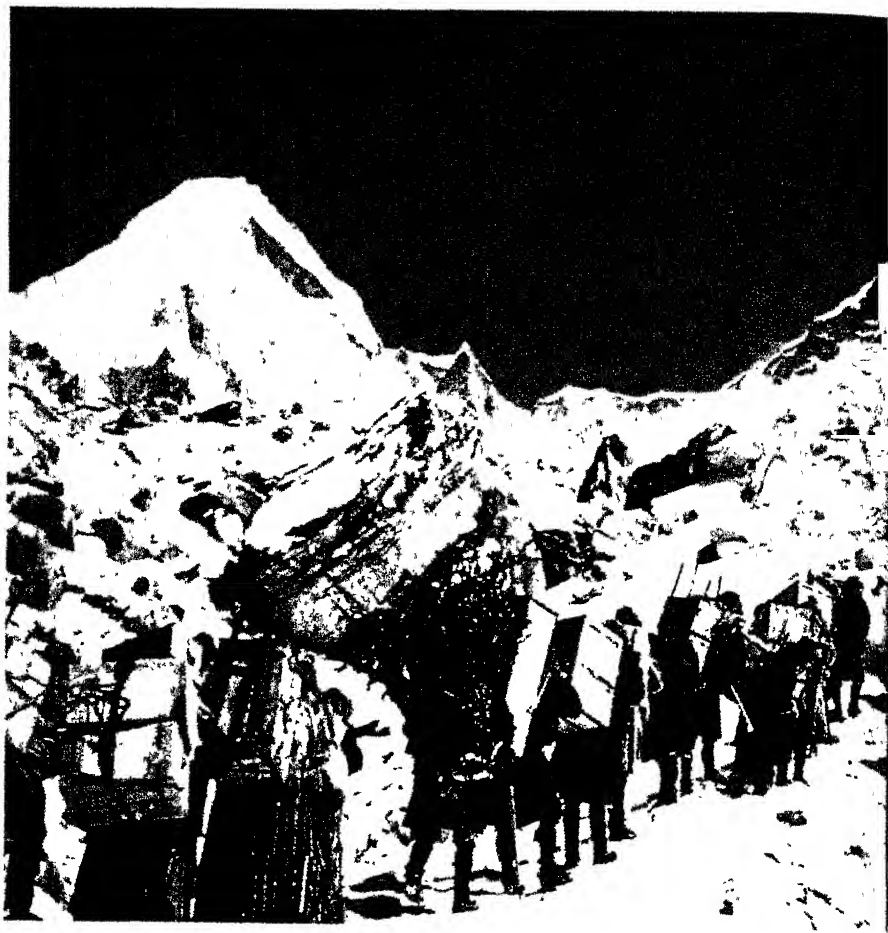
The sun was now very hot indeed, and as its rays reflected fiercely from every snowy slope the Cwm became an absolute inferno. The combination of heat and altitude produced a lassitude that was hard to overcome, but we caught up to Hunt and took over the lead. We crossed many crevasses, some of them well concealed and decidedly tricky, and climbed the last small slope to the Swiss Camp IV. A pile

of snow-covered boxes and bags greeted our eyes. We dug around and a considerable amount of useful food—cheese, bacon, jam and other odds and ends—came to light. Then Hunt and Evans arrived. Hunt looked drawn and tired, but we were already accustomed to his habit of driving himself to the limit with an inevitable reaction at the end of the day. The astonishing thing was how he recovered overnight and pushed on as hard as ever the next day.

Hunt felt confident that we could climb to the South Col in two or three days, but Evans and I were more pessimistic—at least a week was our bet. After a couple of hours Tenzing and I started down, as we were going right back to Base Camp. We raced down the Cwm and caught up with Noyce and Gregory and their Sherpas, who had dumped their loads about half an hour from Camp IV. At Camp III we met Bourdillon and Ward, who had brought up a band of laden porters. The icefall lift seemed to be on in earnest.

At Camp II we found George Lowe in residence with a group of porters. For a few moments we swapped stories and then we turned to leave. "I'll say hello over the radio link-up at five o'clock," I said. "That'll be the day," said George, for this meant getting down to base in the unprecedented time of less than an hour. This seemed a good-enough excuse to hurry and I set off at a run with the unfortunate Tenzing running behind. I jogged through the "Atom Bomb" area and approached its last crevasse. Not waiting to cross the bridge I took a mighty leap in the air and landed with some force on the far side. It was too much for the overhanging lip and with a sharp crack it split off and descended into the crevasse with me on top of it. I didn't have much time to think. I threw my cramponed feet hard against one wall and my shoulders against the other. Next moment the rope came tight and the ice block dropped away underneath me. Tenzing's reaction had been very quick. I cut my way to the surface and thanked Tenzing for his capable handling of the situation. He seemed to regard it as a rather good joke. Berating myself mentally for being so foolishly careless I started on again. But human nature being what it is I reached Base Camp just in time to say a breathless "hello" to George.

I had found Tenzing an admirable companion—capable, willing and extremely pleasant. His rope work was first class, as my near-catastrophe had shown. Although not perhaps technically outstanding in icecraft, he was very strong and determined and an excellent acclimatizer. Best of all, as far as I was concerned, he was

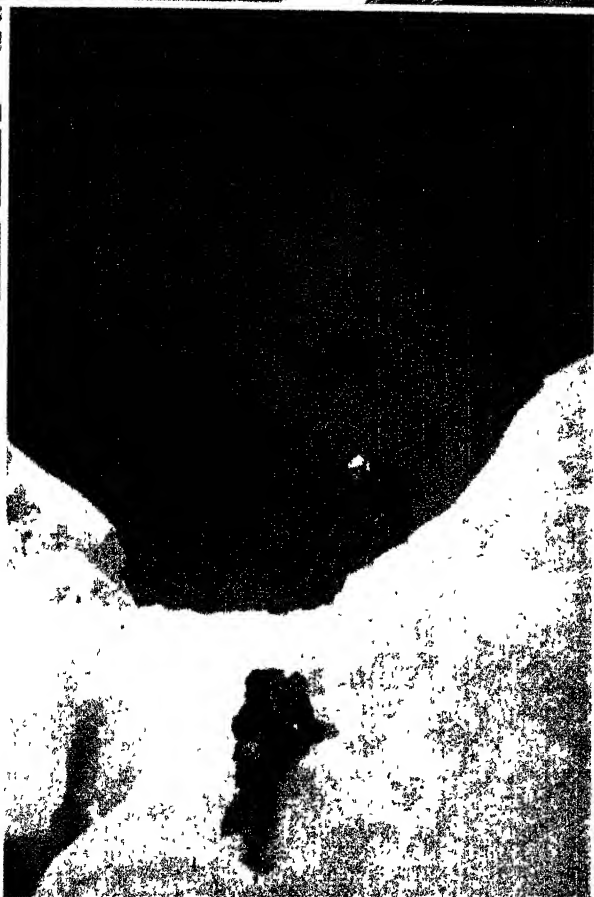


For the next few days, despite heavy falls of snow, the lifts of gear to the Western Cwm went on continuously. Apart from this tedious and often dangerous work, the main interest in the expedition had turned to the reconnaissance of the Lhotse Face, which we felt was the key to the summit. Hunt had decided that, in order to give our new oxygen equipment a thorough testing at high altitudes, it should be used on this reconnaissance. Bourdillon and Evans, the formidable team who were using the rather radical "closed-circuit" oxygen set, were to be the spearhead of the attack, and Hunt himself one of the support group.

All of us who weren't taking part in the reconnaissance looked with envy on those who were. I'd already had more than my share of



The march (above) to the site of Base Camp was a gruelling test of strength, the Sherpa porters heavily laden and dazzled by the bright snow. Base Camp (top right) was finally established on the Khumbu glacier, with the towering height of Nuptse visible beyond.



Everyone was eager to explore the Khumbu icefall. Here Lowe (ahead) and Hunt are seen on the icefall above Camp II.

enjoyable jobs, but I racked my brains for some excuse that would let me get in at least on the ground floor of the reconnaissance. At last I proposed to Hunt that two of us should do a long and severe test of our open-circuit oxygen apparatus. I'd gone to some pains to become thoroughly conversant with the mechanics of this set, but as there had been no need for oxygen at the moderate heights of the icefall and Western Cwm, the open-circuit set had not really been fully tested out. My suggestion was that if the set enabled two of us to go from Base Camp to Camp IV and back in one day—a full two-day trip without oxygen—we would have shown its worth. Our confidence in it would be enormously increased. And confidence was going to be a vital factor when we used oxygen at great altitudes. Hunt, happily, agreed to this suggestion and to Tenzing accompanying me.

On May 1 most of the party were on the icefall or up in the Western Cwm and it was very quiet at Base Camp. I knew that on the following day the closed-circuit team would be attacking the Lhotse Face and I was eager to be at Camp IV when they returned. All afternoon I worked, preparing the two oxygen sets.

We woke very early, had a quick breakfast and then put our oxygen sets onto our backs and turned them on. At 6:30 am we were away. I knew that our oxygen would be completely exhausted by eleven thirty so I set a hard pace. We surged up through the lower icefall and the forty pounds on our backs seemed like nothing at all. "This oxygen is certainly the stuff," I thought, as we reached Camp II in less than an hour and a half. Refreshed by hot coffee, we moved on again. We found the two inches of fresh snow on the track no problem at all and walked into Camp III after fifty minutes. We had another coffee and continued on into the Western Cwm. To our annoyance we suddenly struck deep, soft snow, that was sometimes up to our knees. Although the sun was beating down and the glare was terrific, we finally dragged ourselves into Camp IV at eleven thirty—two hours travelling from Camp III—and crawled into one of the tents for a rest. We recovered remarkably quickly, however, and were soon taking a keen interest in food and drink.

The day passed quite pleasantly. Wylie and Ward arrived with heavy loads, and after them came six Sherpas. Before long a much bigger camp had been established. But there was still no sign of the others. We were seriously contemplating a rescue party when they appeared in sight, moving very slowly down towards us. From their frequent rests it was obvious that they'd had a tough day. We went out to meet them. Evans and Bourdillon were very tired, and Hunt

looked absolutely exhausted. I was helping him down the slope when he produced a classic of understatement: "You know, Ed, for the first time I really feel a bit done in!" They told us that they'd managed to reach about 500 feet up the Lhotse Face, but the great heat and heavy loads had more than offset the advantages of the oxygen. However, they still felt confident that the closed-circuit set would make a powerful contribution.

At four twenty, travelling light without any oxygen, Tenzing and I dashed off into a gathering storm. We'd only gone a quarter of a mile down when wind and snow swooped down on us with unbelievable fury. In ten minutes our upward tracks were completely wiped out. The flags we had used to mark our route were, most of the time, invisible. With only my memory of the lie of the land to guide me, I felt my way down. As each flag suddenly appeared in front of or beside me, I looked on it as an old friend and searched anxiously for the next. Now great avalanches were booming down the tremendous cliffs of Everest and Lhotse and sweeping out into the Cwm. Somehow we fumbled our way down and it was a great moment when I found the bridge above Camp III. We crawled across it and in driving hail made our way to the camp. With a shock I realized there were no tents—they had all been moved up to Camp IV. There was nothing to stop for, so we staggered on.

Now I was on familiar ground, but the heavy snow had concealed every hole and small crevasse. I spent half of my time waist deep in hidden holes. Then a sudden easing of the snowfall improved the visibility and we made a desperate dash for Camp II. There was no one there—just sleeping bags and food. I thought of the warm comfort of Base Camp. "What do you think, Tenzing? Shall we push on down?" Tenzing looked into the gathering dusk and shrugged: "Just as you like!" I decided the risk was worth it and started down into the "Atom Bomb" area. In the dim light and under its blanket of snow it was an eerie and frightening sight. Dark holes gaped on every side of us; ghostlike séracs leaned over our heads. For one awful moment I completely lost my sense of direction. I was almost in a panic when I suddenly recognized the shape of a piece of ice and knew we were on the right road.

We crossed its last crevasse, but it was now almost dark and the tumbled mass of ice blocks all looked the same. I took a line across country from flag to flag, and when I couldn't see a flag I just kept going the same way and hoped for the best. For a period, though we were still going down, I could recognize nothing. It was hard work

making the trail in the deep snow and I had to let Tenzing have a go at it. As soon as he got in front of me his black figure and the long rope made the whole slope come into perspective, and I started to recognize the route again. It was pitch dark when we crossed the last bridge in the icefall. It wasn't dangerous any more, but we had no torch so we had to fumble our way along, falling down snow slopes, running into invisible walls. The lights of Base Camp were a welcome sight. "Well, we've made it," I thought, "and I expect we've proved something. But at the moment I've no idea what it is."

Next day most of us went down to a rest camp at Lobuje. To see grass and flowers again was itself a tonic and we lay around idly in the sun laughing and talking. We could almost feel the flesh growing back onto our lean frames.

When we returned to Base Camp three days later the Lhotse Face reconnaissance party was there. We noisily cross-questioned them. They'd met many difficulties but had established Camp V at 22,000 feet and Camp VI at 23,000 feet. In a last thrust, Evans and Bourdillon had reached to over 23,500 feet. They had come to two conclusions—first, that the Lhotse Face was a tough proposition and second, that the closed-circuit oxygen apparatus worked extremely well.

Most of the night John Hunt's light was shining and his typewriter was tapping. But when he called Evans and myself together for a conference next morning, May 7, he was his usual drawn-faced but positive self. He invited our comments on a list he'd drawn up apportioning certain tasks in the assault to certain people. We agreed with all his selections. We crossed over to the large tent where the whole expedition was gathered. Hunt started talking and there was a hush of suppressed excitement and anticipation in the tent. He explained the problems ahead: the Lhotse Face, the establishing of a substantial camp on the South Col, the putting in of a very high camp at 28,000 feet, and finally two assaults with different types of oxygen apparatus. There was nothing new about this, and on every face I could read the same thought, "Hurry up, John! What job are you giving to me?"

John picked up his list and started reading. The tough problem of the Lhotse Face had been given to Lowe, Westmacott and Band: the vital job of getting a large number of Sherpa porters to the South Col to Noyce and Wylie; the first assault party, using the powerful closed-circuit oxygen apparatus, was to be Evans and Bourdillon; Hunt and Gregory were the support party to establish Camp IX at

28,000 feet; Tenzing and I were the second assault party using the open-circuit oxygen set. When John came to Tenzing's name, he smiled as though well satisfied. In fact there was general satisfaction, except perhaps for poor Mike Ward, who had been asked to act as a reserve. He was finding the responsibilities of being medical officer an unhappy restriction on his climbing activities.

Right from the start the Lhotse Face party became depleted. Band developed a cold and had to return to base, and Westmacott, though he tried again and again, seemed unable to drive himself much over 22,000 feet. So the burden of the task fell on George Lowe. By May 11 he was established in Camp VI at a height of 23,000 feet, his only companion a tough, strong Sherpa, Ang Nyima. In shocking weather conditions these two men cut innumerable steps, put in fixed ropes on the more dangerous stretches, and generally transformed the route into one that a heavily laden man could follow.

We were getting worried about the weather. For six weeks not a day had passed without a snowfall, and we feared that the monsoon might have already arrived and that our attempts were doomed to failure. I was conducting parties of Sherpas from Camp III to Camp IV and back again. For five successive mornings I had to break trail up the Cwm in fresh snow a foot deep. But despite the weather the work went on. By May 14 the majority of our stores had been lifted through the icefall and most of us had moved up to live at Camp IV. George Lowe had succeeded in pushing the route through to 24,000 feet and had found a site for Camp VII.

On May 15 I had my first close look at the Lhotse Face. Noyce and I with three Sherpas took loads up to Camp VI. George was there, as he was having a rest day. Despite his long spell at this considerable height without oxygen, he still looked fresh and fit. I sorted out some gear and divided it up between the three Sherpas and myself. Then we carried it up to Camp VII. Carrying a load was hard work at this altitude, as we weren't using oxygen. It was a great thrill to me to arrive at 24,000 feet—the highest I'd ever been. I was greatly encouraged to find that I could, if necessary, have gone a great deal further.

I returned to Advance Base, Camp IV, and there now commenced the most frustrating period that the expedition was to experience. From our grandstand seat we could watch all the activities on the Lhotse Face with binoculars. Every morning a worried line of climbers would be looking anxiously upwards, and none was more anxious than John Hunt.

"May 16th ... George Lowe and Wilf Noyce started from Camp VI for VII but after going halfway returned. George had taken a sleeping pill with disastrous effect and kept falling asleep. ..."

A vital day lost!

"May 17th ... George and Wilf reached Camp VII and did a short reconnaissance above. ... Wilf then returned to Advance Base with Sherpas, and Mike Ward and Tenzing stayed with George. ..."

"May 18th ... George, Mike and Tenzing went for a short distance above Camp VII and then returned to camp. Apparently windy and cold, but it seemed to us that there was a certain lack of drive. ..."

I argued strongly with Hunt. The whole Lhotse attack was too weak; George Lowe had done a good job, but he'd been up there too long and no longer had any punch. Why couldn't some of us go up and finish off the job? But our leader refused to hasten into any ill-considered action. He didn't intend to expend his assault teams on the Lhotse Face.

"May 19th ... We watched Camp VII with great eagerness but there was no sign of activity. Band took a group of Sherpas to Camp VII with loads and reported George's opinion that it was too windy and cold to start ..."

Valuable time was passing and obviously some drastic action was called for. John Hunt made a strong and courageous decision. He decided to commence immediately the carrying of equipment and food up to the South Col. The men would have to make the route for themselves. Noyce had the responsibility of seeing that the Sherpas got there. On May 20 he and his nine Sherpas climbed slowly up to Camp VII. Later on in the day, George Lowe and his companions returned to Advance Base. Despite ten days on the Lhotse Face, George looked astonishingly fit and declared himself ready to return to action after a few days' rest.

We were out of our tents unusually early on May 21, for we knew it was probably our most crucial day. Would the Sherpas start? we kept asking ourselves. For a long time nothing happened and then at 10:00 am we saw two dots climbing above Camp VII. Most of the Sherpas had refused to start, so Noyce and a stouthearted Sherpa named Annullu were trying to get through by themselves, using oxygen. With intense excitement we watched them climb steadily up the Lhotse glacier and then strike out strongly to the left across the great traverse leading to the South Col.

On the lower slopes, Charles Wylie and a group of nine Sherpas

were making their way slowly towards Camp VII. With all of them crowded into Camp VII, the supplies of food and fuel there would be quickly consumed. Either the whole party would have to get to the South Col tomorrow or descend instead into the Cwm, which would delay the attack by a week. They must be persuaded to go on!

I pleaded with Hunt to let me and Tenzing go up and add a boost to the next day's effort. Tenzing's presence alone would probably inspire his Sherpas to action. To my surprise John readily agreed—he'd probably decided on the same course himself—but he stressed the importance of our not going above Camp VII unless it was absolutely necessary. I told Tenzing the good news, then hastily helped prepare two oxygen sets.

We reached Camp VII at 4:30 pm and Noyce and Annullu returned half an hour later. They'd done magnificently and had reached the South Col. That evening Tenzing was invaluable; he and Wylie organized all the loads and allocated them to the Sherpas so that we could have an early start. As we crawled into our tents for the night, the morale in the camp was excellent. Remembering Hunt's instructions I asked Tenzing if he thought the Sherpas could get to the South Col without our going along. He thought they couldn't, so I decided we'd have to go on.

The morning was fine but cold, with a bitter wind. Tenzing and I went on ahead, kicking and cutting a route, while Wylie coaxed and helped the Sherpas along. By the time we reached the top of the Lhotse glacier, the Sherpas were already tired; on the traverse many of them lay down to rest and crawled on their hands and knees. But somehow they kept on, and thirteen stouthearted Sherpas climbed the last few hundred feet and dropped their loads on the South Col. It was a triumph. The South Col had been stocked. The way was now open for the assault.

As Tenzing and I climbed wearily down towards Advance Base we met a heavily laden party on the way up—it was the "closed-circuit team" of Evans and Bourdillon, and Hunt himself. In two days they'd be camping on the South Col. The attack was on!

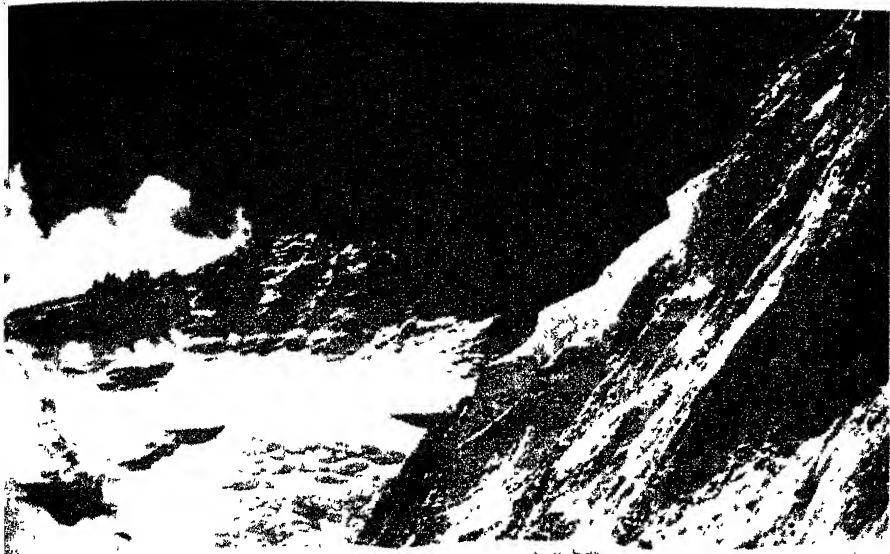
SOUTH COL

I was running for my life! Leaping from ice block to ice block, I sought to escape a monstrous pile of ice that was crashing down behind me. Suddenly a gigantic crevasse loomed in front of me—I



was trapped! In desperation I looked round at the grinding ice surging towards me...

I awoke to strangely mixed feelings of discomfort and anticipation. My air mattress had deflated during the night and my hip was resting on inhospitable ice. To escape a rather too realistic dream, I opened my eyes and looked around the familiar surroundings of Camp IV. Scattered around the icy floor were the sleeping bodies of my companions, all hidden in the depths of their sleeping bags. A chaotic mass of oxygen apparatus, rucksacks, spare clothing, ropes, crampons and ice axes cluttered up the remaining room. With a feeling of distaste, I closed my eyes again. It was just another morning at Camp IV! Life at over 21,000 feet didn't leave you



The lower part of the Western Cwm (above), showing the "first step", with the foot of the Lhotse Face about 2½ miles distant; (left) a ferry party travelling up the Cwm on the way to Camp IV.

Camp V, sited further up the Cwm, looking towards the west ridge of Everest.

feeling full of joy and happiness. Then, suddenly, my mind cleared and I remembered that this was probably for me the most important of all days. It was our turn to start on the long slow upward grind that might, with luck, end on the summit of Everest.

I reluctantly moved an arm from the warmth of the sleeping bag and fumbled around for the valve to the air mattress. With repugnance at the thought of the numerous other mouths that had already chewed on it, I placed it between my lips and began to blow steadily. Slowly I was raised from my chilly proximity to the ice. Not moving from my sleeping bag, I dragged myself over to the door and looked out. Already the morning sun was sharply etching the jagged summit of Lhotse, 7,000 feet above us, but the South Col still looked grim and foreboding. As I snuggled deep within my sleeping bag I thought of Hunt and Evans and Bourdillon in their lonely camp—My God! They must be cold up there.

In half an hour a cheerful Sherpa face appeared at the tent door and soon we were all grasping large mugs of what we called “high-altitude tea”—a brown hottish liquid with a thick scum of fat, tea leaves, lumps of milk powder and the remnants of last night’s stew—a grim necessity that had to be forced down into an uneasy stomach at all costs. With loathing I consumed half of it and then, stimulated by its warmth, dragged myself out of my sleeping bag. I felt terribly weak, and for a moment the unpleasant thought flashed across my mind that perhaps the altitude was affecting me at last. But I reminded myself that we always felt like this in the morning. Dressing involved merely the pulling on of my boots, but it seemed to take a long time. I dragged myself heavily to my feet and lurched out of the tent. I looked high up the mountain to see what the wind was doing. It looked most encouraging! The usual long plume of wind-driven powder snow was absent and the long ridge of Lhotse, normally tormented by wind, looked peaceful and quiet. I moved cautiously over the snow to Tenzing’s tent and shouted a greeting to his recumbent body. He gave his cheerful grin and crawled out of his bag. I prepared our oxygen sets carefully, turned on all the valves and listened as oxygen rushed from the masks in a series of hoarse pants. They seemed all right, but we couldn’t afford to have anything go wrong now.

The whole camp stirred to activity as Thondup, the cook, appeared with breakfast—porridge, canned bacon, and, best of all, fresh eggs which had been collected from villages in the valleys and carried laboriously up to our camp. I attacked the food with vigour,

the exciting thought of what lay ahead effectively subduing the lethargy of altitude. I looked at the time—9:15 am. At Camp V, a thousand feet above us, we could see Lowe and Gregory, with eight Sherpas, winding slowly out onto the Lhotse Face. They were to support us in our assault. Tenzing and I heaved our heavy loads onto our backs and put on our oxygen masks. In order to maintain our strength we were using oxygen all the way from Camp IV.

We tied our nylon rope round our waists and, with a wave to the party, I led off up the Western Cwm. The trail was beaten hard by the passage of many feet and wound up the easy snow slopes ahead like a giant snake. The weather was perfect, with scarcely a breath of wind. Around us towered the tremendous rock and ice walls of the Western Cwm, and higher still was the incredibly deep blue of the sky. But we seemed cut off from all by our oxygen masks. In the thin air every step required a conscious breathing effort and it demanded most of our attention, though I was now feeling in excellent form. Far above us, Lowe and Gregory, with their Sherpas, were climbing up a steep portion of the Lhotse ice face. The thought "I wonder if we can catch them up" drifted into my mind, and almost unconsciously I increased my pace, my forty-five-pound load dragging uncomfortably at my shoulders. I glanced back at Tenzing. He seemed to be going well. The track crossed an unstable snow bridge, dodged an impassable crevasse, climbed a steepish slope and suddenly we were at Camp V.

A deserted camp is always a depressing sight, and this was no exception—three or four sagging tents with an area of dirty trampled snow between them and in every direction empty containers, ranging from bully-beef cans to oxygen bottles. We took our loads off and had a brief rest. Our view down the Western Cwm was superb! Guarding the entrance to the valley were the great ice-clad buttresses of Nuptse and the west ridge of Everest, while framed between them was the shapely peak of Pumori—the Tibetan for "daughter peak"—so named by Mallory after his own daughter. Above us the first party was going well and had nearly reached Camp VI. After ten minutes' rest, we moved on after them.

We were now approaching the first great ice cliffs of the Lhotse Face. When we reached a little terrace at the foot of the cliffs, we took off our loads, removed our oxygen masks, and sat on the snow, breathing slowly and deeply and enjoying the wonderful sweep of glacier and ridge and peak before us.

There was hard, difficult work ahead. We strapped on crampons,

checked the rope tying us together, replaced our oxygen sets, and started up the first really steep slope. A great stairway had been hewn in the hard green ice, and as we climbed up it we were thankful to use a long fixed rope as a handrail. Increasingly conscious of the great drop beneath us, we shuffled across a narrow ice ledge over a vertical ice wall. Above us stretched a steep and narrow gully. I had never liked this gully, for at the bottom of it was a large crevasse bridged only by a sagging snow bridge. Gingerly I crossed the bridge and in imagination felt it give beneath my feet. Spurred on by my fears, I raced up the gully until the rope suddenly came tight and the unfortunate Tenzing was almost dragged off his feet. But then I was out of danger and could relax on a snow shelf as Tenzing hurried up to join me.

Ahead of us we could see a long rope hanging down a very steep ice slope. This was undoubtedly the most difficult part of the Lhotse Face. Above us was a slope, about 400 feet long, of hard, green ice. I moved to the bottom of it and gave the rope a reassuring tug to make sure it was firmly attached. A rickety route ran for twenty feet up the ice slope, an unstable, almost vertical, ice cliff. Like an old hen I grubbed around with my ice axe trying to scratch out a few steps in the crumbling ice. Then I resigned myself to the inevitable, took a firm grip on the suspended rope and with a rush clawed my way to the top. Tenzing scrambled energetically up behind me and we moved on again.

With an instinctive tensing of muscles and nerves I traversed steeply up the ice slope, taking advantage of the fixed rope as the route became more and more exposed. Far below, almost under our feet it seemed, was Camp V. Tenzing was moving steadily behind me, head down and shoulders bent as he lifted himself determinedly from step to step. The slope seemed never ending, but suddenly I could see Camp VI—a tiny ledge under an ice wall. With relief I climbed up to it.

Ten days before, Camp VI had been the main base for operations on the Lhotse Face. Now, a few ropes and some empty cans were the only evidence left of an uncomfortable but essential staging point. We sat down on the ledge and dangled our feet over the slope below. It looked awfully steep! I dropped an empty oxygen bottle over the edge. With horrifying rapidity it slithered down the ice, shot into the air above a great precipice and then seemed to float gracefully down for an unbearably long time before disappearing into a crevasse. With a hollow feeling inside I dragged myself further onto the ledge.

We moved on again, winding in and out amongst crevasses and climbing short but steep ice slopes. A long traverse to the left gained us considerable height and took us to the foot of a great line of broken ice cliffs. We scrambled along amongst broken debris at the foot of them, then climbed sharply up a steep slope to reach a little ledge of snow—the first flat place since Camp VI. Only a short distance above us now were the stragglers from the first party. Lowe and Gregory had already disappeared behind the ice pinnacle concealing Camp VII. Feeling a little like an express train overhauling a slow freight, we caught up with these men and made sure that they were capable of reaching the camp. With the pleasant feeling of a job nearly done, we surmounted the last line of steps, climbed round an ice pinnacle and emerged just below the tents of Camp VII. We had climbed 3,000 feet and were a little tired. I glanced at my watch: 12:30 pm. We'd done it in three and a quarter hours—easily the fastest time yet. With a glow of ill-concealed satisfaction I strode up to the tents and greeted Lowe and Gregory.

That afternoon at Camp VII was the finest we'd had for six weeks. The sun beat down warmly and there was hardly a breath of wind. It looked as though we would get the few fine days that were essential if our attack on the summit was to have any hope of success.

We prepared everything for the next day. Eight Sherpas were spending the night with us at Camp VII, three of them specially picked men whom we had kept in reserve to carry loads for the camp we planned to establish at about 28,000 feet; the other five a magnificent group of men who had carried loads to the South Col for us before and had volunteered to do it a second time.

Later, lying in our cosy sleeping bags, sipping hot soup and munching biscuits, we were hardly conscious of our 24,000 feet. In order to guarantee ourselves a good, restful sleep we were using sleeping oxygen—oxygen at a very slow rate of flow. But because of our inactivity at night it had a considerable effect and we quickly fell asleep.

I woke up feeling cold and uncomfortable. Our oxygen had run out and the whole camp was frozen. It was very early, but I knew it would take a long time to prepare breakfast and depart. I stirred up Tenzing and then bellowed to the others to start up the kerosene stoves. They were understandably reluctant to respond, but when Tenzing joined in we produced a duet that finally achieved a weak acknowledgment. Soon we heard the familiar rattling sounds of the stove-lighting operation. Any task at this altitude takes a long time,

as the brain and body, affected by the lack of oxygen, have little coordination or concentration. It was at least an hour and a half before we managed to get a lukewarm mug of tea and a few biscuits.

It was soon another lovely morning at Camp VII, though high on the mountain a cloud of powder snow was blowing off the ridge. Lowe, Gregory and I optimistically discussed our prospects. Meanwhile, Tenzing was hastening the other Sherpas. On one rope we tied the three "high-altitude" Sherpas and on another the five who were going only to the South Col. Lowe and Gregory roped up together and so did Tenzing and I. There was no initial warming up as we moved out of camp, for our first move was to cross a large crevasse by a difficult and dangerous snow bridge. Climbing cautiously but rather clumsily, we belayed each other across on the rope.

The upper Lhotse Face continued in a succession of steep and difficult ice walls. I led off upwards. Despite my usual early-morning feeling of debility, I could feel my leg muscles taking the load easily. Pausing only to clear any fresh snow out of the ice steps, I continued up, feeling a certain fierce joy in throwing myself against the barrier of altitude and beating it. I knew Tenzing would be plugging behind safely and with determination. We were now in the sun and our spirits lightened. We drew steadily away from the rest of the party and I knew we'd have to stop and wait for them; but first we had to cross a last crevasse and reach the top of the Lhotse glacier. Deep and wide, it stretched right across the Lhotse Face, and there was no snow bridge. The upper and lower lips of the crevasse overhung the icy depths and stretched to within three feet of each other. By stepping onto one overhanging lip and stretching across to the other we could cross—as long as neither step gave way. I signalled to Tenzing to hold the rope tight and then, stepping as lightly as I could, shot across, getting a vivid impression of unpleasant depths below. I brought Tenzing across on the rope and we settled down in the snow to wait and rest.

Our view was impressive. In front of us, the Lhotse Face dropped four thousand feet to the Western Cwm. We were at 25,000 feet and could just see over the top of the fantastic ice pinnacles on our left to a vista of cloud-filled valleys and jagged ice peaks, seeming to stretch for hundreds of miles across Nepal. A murmur of voices and some grunts of effort told us that the others were crossing the crevasse. They soon appeared, and with gasps of relief the Sherpas sank down beside us. Our five South Col volunteer "tigers" looked cheerful and fit, but the three specially picked ones were not going at all well. This

was rather a worry, as we had expected to get a good deal of help from them.

A shout from George Lowe attracted my attention. I looked in the direction he was pointing and had one of the greatest thrills I have ever experienced. High above us loomed the south summit of Mt. Everest, joined to the South Col by the long southeast ridge, and moving onto that ridge were two tiny figures—the first assault team of Evans and Bourdillon. They were going well, very well! We knew that their primary objective was to reach the south summit, but our hopes were high that they might have sufficient time and energy to go on towards the top. Then we noticed two more figures a little distance behind. According to our plans this should have been John Hunt and two Sherpas carrying equipment and oxygen up to the ridge for the second assault party, but apparently only one of the Sherpas had started.

Evans and Bourdillon were going in great style and the gap between them and Hunt's party was steadily widening. Feeling very excited, we started out onto the great traverse leading up to the South Col. The Sherpas, fully convinced that Evans and Bourdillon were going to reach the top, were cheerful and noisy, but Tenzing seemed strangely silent. Later, when we reached the South Col and before we knew how far Evans and Bourdillon had gone, he confided to John Hunt that he considered that a Sherpa should have been in the first party to reach the top.

Lowe and Gregory had the responsibility of getting the Sherpas to the Col and had to stay with them, but I was keen on getting up quickly, to give any assistance that was needed to the first party. The route lay across the tremendous slope which runs in one great sweep from the summit of Lhotse to the Western Cwm. The tracks made by the previous party were largely intact, and moving steadily and rhythmically, I soon became almost oblivious to our surroundings. The wonderful views around us, the terrific depths underneath, meant nothing. Forcing my lungs to the utmost I sought to relieve the dreadful feelings of deadness in my limbs and pain in my chest. My whole body was crying out for rest, but I knew it was just a weakness of the flesh that had to be ignored. "South Col or bust!"—that was it! Ruthless in my determination, I looked round at the luckless Tenzing. Head down, he was matching me step for step with dogged determination. High up, the southeast ridge was enveloped in cloud. But suddenly it cleared, and we could see Evans and Bourdillon still climbing strongly, nearly as high as men had ever

been. John Hunt and his companion had stopped a little way up the ridge and were going no further. Then the clouds closed in again.

In order to reach the Col we had to climb to the top of the rocky Geneva Spur and then drop down a slope on the other side. We came to the end of the great traverse and started climbing a steep snow gully. We scrambled up a mixture of rock and snow, and then finally to the top of the Geneva Spur. Towering above our heads was our mountain, looking depressingly steep and formidable. Clouds were streaming off it under the strong wind and we could see no sign of Evans and Bourdillon. Several hundred feet below us was the South Col—icy, barren and windswept. Down there in a lonely group were three small tents, their canvas bucking and thrashing in the wind. Lowe, Gregory and the Sherpas were out of sight, so without waiting for them we moved down the slope and approached the tents. In response to our shouts the door of the middle tent opened and a face emerged—the face of a Sherpa named Balu. I have never seen anyone looking more ashamed of himself. Balu was a big, swanking chap who had thrown his weight about a good deal lower down and had been recommended by Tenzing as one of the special high-altitude men. But on the South Col his nerve had cracked and he had refused to go any higher. He greeted us sullenly and then withdrew into his lair. We turned our oxygen off and removed our loads. My eyes strayed irresistibly back to the great slopes above us and I suddenly noticed two black dots on the snow, moving slowly and painfully down towards us. It must be John Hunt and Da Namgyal! I asked Tenzing to prepare some hot drinks and without bothering to use any oxygen, I started up the icy slopes.

Hunt and Da Namgyal were moving at a funereal pace. They seemed able to walk only fifty feet before slumping down on the ice for a rest. Spurred on by their obvious distress, I made rapid height and reached them just as an exhausted John Hunt dropped to the ice once more. He told me that he and Da Namgyal had carried their heavy loads up onto the southeast ridge as high as they could. When they couldn't even crawl further on their hands and knees, they left their loads in a little pile and struggled down. Hunt was terribly tired, for in his unselfish urge to leave supplies as high as possible on the mountain, he had left his half-used bottle of oxygen up there and had come down without it. He was obviously going to need assistance down to the tents. I looked at Da Namgyal, a faithful and strong Sherpa. His cheerful, determined smile showed he still had a little strength in reserve.

I put John Hunt's arm over my shoulder and held him firmly round the waist and started down the ice slope again. Frequent rests were necessary, but when John slipped down onto the ice once again I realized that something more drastic was required. I left him sitting on the ice and raced back down to camp, heaved my oxygen set onto my back and returned. I put the oxygen mask on John's face and turned on the maximum flow. It had an immediate effect and soon he was able to drag himself to his feet and move slowly down the ice slope and up to the tents. We crawled inside and I flooded the tent with oxygen. The door opened and Tenzing thrust in a hot drink to complete the recovery.

Suddenly the tent swayed and shook as George Lowe thrust his bearded countenance into the entrance and shouted, "They're up! By God, they're up!" Then an elated George explained that the clouds had cleared for a moment and he'd seen the tiny figures of Evans and Bourdillon moving up on the south summit. This was wonderful news! The south summit was 28,700 feet high—only 300 feet from the top—and a lot higher than men had ever been before. To reach it in one day from the South Col was a tremendous effort.

Excitedly we discussed the likelihood of their reaching the top. It was fairly late and their oxygen might be running short. My thoughts drifted back to Camp IV, where we'd been discussing the possibility of the first assault party having to make this decision. Tom Bourdillon, in his slow, steady way, had told us not to worry, as both he and Charles Evans were pretty sensible chaps with a keen desire to go on living. Charles was about the most sensible chap I knew—but I wasn't quite as sure about Tom. I had a great respect for Tom's bulldog determination but I didn't feel too sure that it mightn't at times influence his judgment. Well, we could only wait and see!

I crawled out of the tent. It was cloudy and bitterly cold. The Sherpas who were carrying loads to the Col for us for the second time had just arrived. Looking fit and strong despite their exhausting carry, they cheerfully told us they were quite capable of getting down to Camp VII again, without escort.

They had a quick hot drink and then couldn't resist a hasty souvenir hunt amongst the remnants of the Swiss tents before setting off back along their tracks, accompanied by a cheerful Da Namgyal and a sullen Balu. Clad in every bit of our clothing, George Lowe and I set to work to make the camp shipshape. We had three tents, all flapping furiously in the wind. Their guy ropes needed tightening, so George and I commenced prising boulders out of their icy beds,



The above photograph, taken from the traverse on the Lhotse Face, shows a view of Everest, much foreshortened, and the top of the Geneva Spur. In the photograph on the left, the cliff of Everest and the Geneva Spur can be seen rising beyond Camp VII.

carrying them to the tents as anchors, and replacing frayed ropes. After a great deal of work we had the tents organized to resist the worst of weather.

We had seen nothing further of Evans and Bourdillon. More worrying, perhaps, was the nonappearance of our three Sherpa "specials". It was a great relief to us when they came over the Geneva Spur and descended slowly towards us. One of them, Ang Temba, was weaving his way down the slope like a drunken man. As he approached the tents, he stumbled and fell slowly onto his face and lay there—dead to the world. On the South Col you become hard, so my only thought was, "Blast it! That's one less to carry a load!" We put Ang Temba inside the tent, out of the wind.



These Sherpas twice carried loads to the South Col without oxygen. Left to right: Pasang Dawa, Dawa Thondup, Ang Norbu, Pasang Phutar, Topkie, Annullu.

A cry from George Lowe told us he'd caught sight of Evans and Bourdillon. The clouds had cleared for a moment and there they were—still at over 27,000 feet. Just as the clouds blotted out our view we saw them start down the steep snow couloir, or gully, which leads down to the long slopes above the South Col. "Thank God they are safe!" After ten minutes we picked them out again—to our surprise at the bottom of the couloir! They seemed to have got down it extraordinarily quickly, but now they were going very slowly indeed. The two of us started up the slopes to help them.

Clad in all their bulky clothes, with their great loads of oxygen on their backs and masks on their faces, the two men looked like figures from another world. They moved silently down—a few stiff jerky paces—then stopped. Then a few more paces. They must be very near to complete exhaustion! With a lump in my throat, I climbed up to where they now stood waiting, silent and with bowed shoulders, encased in ice. There was ice on their clothing, their oxygen sets, their rope. It was hanging from their hair and beards and eyebrows. Feeling more emotional than I thought possible I threw my arms round their tired shoulders and muttered some familiar abuse. Charles Evans thumped me weakly in the ribs and his calm, lilting Welsh voice broke the spell and everything seemed to come back to normal.

George Lowe had conscientiously filmed our meeting, but now he joined us and lightened the air with a vigorous greeting. Despite their exhaustion the two men were carrying in their hands two bottles of oxygen which the Swiss had jettisoned at the bottom of the couloir the previous autumn. We took the bottles from them and helped them down the hill. Soon we were met by Hunt and Gregory, and then Tenzing arrived with hot soup. He gently wiped the ice off their beards and held the steaming mugs of soup to their lips. It took a long time to get back to the tents.

Evans and Bourdillon had a great deal to tell. Their original plan had been to leave very early in the morning, but the valves of their complicated closed-circuit oxygen sets kept icing up. At seven thirty they managed to get their sets going and set off from the South Col. They were breathing almost pure oxygen and this gave them great vigour, so they were able to climb quickly. At 28,300 feet—higher than man had ever been before—they reached the bottom of the long, very steep slope running up to the south summit. They could see that ahead of them were few, if any, places to rest, so they decided to change over to fresh bottles of oxygen. Leaving their

nearly empty bottles behind as a reserve, they started off again. It was immediately apparent that something was wrong with Evans's set. Despite frantic efforts to fix it, they were never fully successful. Impatient to get on, Bourdillon continued up the severe slopes with Evans trailing behind and having considerable difficulty with his breathing.

After a grim struggle they reached their primary objective—the south summit—and were the first men to look along the ridge towards the top.

They then had to make a difficult decision—should they go on or turn back? Their life's ambition was almost within their grasp—the summit of Mt. Everest! But the ridge ahead was too difficult. Evans felt that they had neither the strength nor oxygen to continue safely, while Bourdillon thought he might have a chance if he went on alone. After some discussion a reluctant Bourdillon agreed to turn back. Too tired to climb safely, they stumbled down the ridge with frequent slips and falls. Their quick descent of the couloir was now explained—they'd fallen down it and only the good fortune of soft snow at the bottom had saved them from injury or worse. But they had got down—that was the main thing—and after a feat of courage and endurance as great as had ever been performed by men at high altitudes. We felt elated and encouraged by their efforts.

We sorted ourselves out for the night: the three Sherpa porters in a little dome tent; Hunt, Evans and Bourdillon crowded into a two-man Meade tent; Lowe, Gregory, Tenzing and I in the large pyramid tent. I made a final check to see that all our guy ropes were intact and then crawled in to a scene of utter confusion. Gregory was lying stolidly full-length in his sleeping bag, and seemed to fill half of the tent. Lowe was struggling with a half-inflated air mattress in a determined effort to get enough room to lie down between Gregory and the wall of the tent. Tenzing, sitting cross-legged, effectively occupied the rest of the room as he watched with an inscrutable air a vast yellow flame, three feet high, which was surging from a kerosene stove between his knees.

With a hearty cry of "Hold tight! Here I come!" I forced my way inside, keeping a wary eye on the flaming cooker. After I'd inflated my air mattress—nearly knocking the cooker over in the process—I pushed it down into the minute space between Tenzing and the wall. I wriggled down inside the sleeping bag and collapsed, panting furiously after the effort. The cooker was now going properly and was melting some snow for soup. We were all hungry, so we spent the

next few hours getting a satisfactory meal out of our limited resources. Biscuits, jam, honey, sardines, dates, chocolate, cheese, canned fruit and hot soup were the main ingredients, but we got the majority of our energy requirements out of mug after mug of hot water flavoured with lemon crystals and sweetened with vast quantities of sugar. Each of us ate nearly a pound of sugar a day. The honey was a rather unexpected delicacy; on the Col we had found two pots left by the Swiss.

With the meal completed, Tenzing turned off the cooker and then squeezed down into his sleeping bag. We were going to use sleeping oxygen in order to try to get some rest so, panting and grunting, we rolled an oxygen bottle into position between each pair of us. Tenzing and I were using the same bottle. I connected up the necessary tubes and reducing valves and attached our face masks. I then turned the tap on and tested each mask to see that the oxygen was flowing freely. All seemed well as I handed Tenzing his mask, adjusted my own and crawled deep into my bag. George Lowe blew out the candle.

As our familiar but uncomfortable little world faded into darkness, the harsh reality of our situation flooded into my mind. I could hear the wind roaring menacingly over the inhospitable wastes of the South Col. In response to it our tent was flapping in a tormented fury, seeking to wrench itself from its bindings. Crammed between Tenzing and the quivering wall I could feel the icy breath from outside penetrating through my sleeping bag and right into my bones! I felt a terrible sense of fear and loneliness. What was the sense in it all? But under the merciful effects of the oxygen I drifted into a half-world of noise and cold and sleep. . . .

That night on the South Col was just about the most unpleasant I had ever experienced. Jammed tightly as I was, turning over required a lot of effort; my face felt sticky and clammy under the oxygen mask, and the cold made life a dull misery. As I dozed and tossed and turned, I prayed for the hours to pass more quickly. At four in the morning I came back to full consciousness with a bump and found that our sleeping oxygen had run out. My air mattress had deflated again and my frozen hip was resting on the ice. Outside, the wind was reaching a new crescendo of fury. Our chances of starting up the mountain seemed nonexistent, but we had to be ready in case the wind dropped. I jabbed the uncomplaining Tenzing in the ribs.

Breathing audibly he sat up and commenced to light the burner.

Under the drag of altitude all his movements seemed languid and it was a long time before the burner was going properly. As the temperature of the tent rose a few degrees life became a little more bearable. I started rummaging around for food and soon all of us were munching biscuits in the flickering light of the stove. Time passed quite pleasantly as we ate and drank and told each other what a miserable night we'd had. George Lowe, through a tiny hole in the tent, had been bombarded all night by a stream of freezing air and powder snow—his sleeping bag was white with frost. It was now quite light and it was astonishing to see how our fears had vanished with the darkness. Lowe, Gregory and I discussed the weather pessimistically: we wouldn't get a hundred feet above the camp unless the wind dropped. I decided to go over to the other tent and discuss matters with John Hunt.

I had slept with all my clothes on, including boots, so I just rolled over to the tent door and started fumbling with the icy tapes which tied it up. They came loose with a rush, and as the door gaped open a stinging shower of powder snow swept into the tent. A chorus of complaints from my companions spurred me to action. I crawled out of the tent and staggered weakly to my feet. Next moment I was on my knees again—blown there by the bitter wind. The other tent was twenty yards away. I crawled across on my hands and knees. High above us a great trail of snow and cloud was streaming off the mountain.

At the Meade tent, I shouted hoarsely to its inmates. The door opened and I crawled thankfully inside. All I could see of Hunt, Evans and Bourdillon was a confused mass of faces, arms and bodies. I sat down on some unidentified legs and we discussed the weather. They all agreed that no upward move was possible. It was essential, however, in order to conserve our supplies, and because of their deteriorating physical condition, that Evans and Bourdillon go down. Hunt, too, looked weak after his exhausting experiences, and I felt rather worried as I crawled back to impart my fears to Lowe and Gregory.

Halfway through the morning the wind started to ease a little, and John Hunt moved into our tent so that Evans and Bourdillon could have sufficient room to get ready for the trip down. I went over to see if I could give them any assistance. They were still lying there, discussing the view they'd had of the final ridge running from the south summit to the top. They couldn't remember anything in the Alps like it; the only comparison they could make was to say that it

must be very similar to the description Lowe and I had given of some of the great snow and ice ridges in New Zealand. I was appalled. Could we cope with that sort of ridge at nearly 29,000 feet? Poor Tom was berating himself for not having gone on alone, and seemed to be living in a mental depression from which he'd emerge every now and then with new figures and times to prove that he could have done it.

Towards midday they emerged from the tent and strapped their crampons onto their boots. Ang Temba was going down too, as he'd been sick all night. I helped them rope up and watched them start off towards the slopes leading to the Western Cwm. Ang Temba went first, with a glassy stare of incomprehension; then Tom Bourdillon; and finally Charles Evans as anchor man. To conserve supplies for the assault, they weren't using oxygen, and they seemed pitifully weak without it. As I watched, Tom Bourdillon bent gradually forward and then, to my horror, fell full length onto the ice. For a moment he didn't stir, while the others waited helplessly. Then he dragged himself onto his elbows, onto his knees, and finally to his feet. Swaying slightly, he took a few slow paces upward, and crashed forward once again. To see Tom's great body sprawled on the ice brought home to me, as nothing else had, the narrow margin at high altitude between survival and extinction. With visions of carrying Tom's two hundred and ten pounds down the mountain I hurried towards them. We decided he'd have to use some oxygen, so Charles Evans and I returned to the tents, prepared an oxygen set and carried it back up. It brought life back into Tom's body and he was able to get to his feet. Still breathing oxygen, he started up the slope at a snail's pace.

I returned to the tents and told John Hunt and George Lowe that I thought that someone should go down with the three men. John agreed, and suggested that George was the man to do it. George suggested that John should go down himself. But John's responsibilities were weighing heavily on him, so he felt he must stay and see the assault through. A very disgruntled George prepared to leave, and then John came to a sudden decision. It had suddenly penetrated into his tired mind that our carrying strength was so depleted that if George went down it might prejudice the whole attack. Immediately casting aside all his deep-seated feelings he decided to descend himself. I have never admired him more than for this difficult decision. As John gathered together his few personal articles we talked. He told me of his deep belief that we had a duty to

climb the mountain if we could, that so many people had pinned their faith and hope on us that we couldn't let them down. "And so, Ed, the main thing is to get down safely, but I know you'll get to the top if you possibly can!" Then he handed me a small envelope and asked me if I'd leave it on top. I opened it and found in it a small white crucifix. John had received it in the post with a note requesting that it be left on the summit, and the idea had instinctively appealed to his idealistic nature. I put it in the pocket of my windproof.

I offered to carry John's pack for him to the top of the Geneva Spur and we left the tent together. Until I started walking behind him I didn't realize just how weak he was. With frequent stops for breath he dragged himself groggily up the slope, all the time saying how well he was feeling and how he'd get the other chaps down safely. We arrived at the top of the Geneva Spur in time to see Bourdillon, despite his oxygen, flat on his face in the snow. This was the last straw! Charles Evans seemed the only rational member of the party. I whispered in his ear: "For God's sake, Charles, keep an eye on John! He's dead on his feet but doesn't realize it!" Charles turned on me his warm and friendly smile and said, "Don't worry, Ed—I'll get them down!" It is some indication of the vast respect I had for Charles that I felt a slight easing of my worry at his words. The four of them moved off, with the Lhotse ice face in front of them. I felt pretty disheartened as I stood there with George Lowe, watching them disappearing out of sight—the blind leading the blind! As we descended to the tents I berated George for not having gone with them. "It will be your fault, George, if they don't get down!" Poor George had already had much the same thought and spent the rest of the day castigating himself.

The party got down safely, but not without a grim struggle. They had nearly reached Camp VII when Ang Temba fell into a crevasse and hung there upside down on the rope. The other men didn't have the strength to pull him out. Fortunately Wilfrid Noyce and Michael Ward were in Camp VII. They dragged Ang Temba to the surface, then helped the weary men into camp.

I spent most of the afternoon on the South Col preparing our oxygen sets and making up loads for the following day, taking three hours to do what I could have done in half an hour at sea level. George Lowe and I braved the wind to cross onto the east side of the Col and had a wonderful view of the great east face of Everest. George and I had visited every side of Everest except this, and it was a tremendous thrill to look down onto the Kangshung glacier, 8,000

or 9,000 feet below us, and mentally link up this last stretch of country with that we already knew. Then we reorganized ourselves for the night. Gregory had lain inactive in his sleeping bag for most of the day, so we left him there. George Lowe stayed with him while Tenzing and I moved into the relative comfort of the Meade tent, with Ang Nyima and Pemba in the dome tent. We decided to use some oxygen again at night, using the two Swiss bottles that Bourdillon and Evans had carried down from the couloir. The wind was still blowing in full force as we settled down for another night. As I turned the oxygen on and blew out the candle I wasn't feeling optimistic about our chances. The wind was showing few signs of abating and Evans had told George Lowe that he doubted we'd be able to get up the summit ridge. Shrugging these thoughts off, I rolled onto my side taking care not to crush the oxygen tube underneath my arm. With only two of us in the tent I had enough room to curl up into a ball and felt a good deal warmer and more comfortable than I had the previous night. I dozed off into an uneasy sleep. Periodically I awoke cold and stiff to find that my air mattress had deflated due to ice in the valve, and with a muttered curse I'd struggle in the dark to poke a pencil into the valve and get it to operate again.

CAMP NINE

I awoke with the feeling that something was wrong. Then I realized what it was. Everything was deathly quiet—the wind had dropped completely. And then I heard it approaching again like an express train emerging from a tunnel and soon the tent was rocking and wrenching in familiar fashion. But the fact that the wind had stopped, even for a moment, was the first hopeful sign we'd had since I'd reached the South Col. It was just after four o'clock, so I stirred Tenzing and we started our long, slow preparations for breakfast. By seven thirty the wind had started to ease a little; I conferred with Lowe and Gregory and we decided to start. I was checking oxygen loads when George Lowe came over to me with a very worried look on his face. Apparently Pemba had been ill all night and didn't feel capable of leaving. We went to see Pemba. All six of us were to carry substantial loads so it was absolutely vital, we thought, that he should carry a load for us up the mountain. But one look at him shattered our hopes. Poor Pemba had been vomiting all

night and looked pale and spiritless. We had now only one Sherpa porter—the stalwart Ang Nyima—and supplies had to be carried up the southeast ridge if we wanted to establish a high camp and have any chance of reaching the top.

There were only two alternatives—to abandon the attempt on Everest or to carry all this gear ourselves. To abandon the attempt was unthinkable. With great care I went through all the loads again, removing anything that wasn't absolutely essential. Lowe, Gregory and Ang Nyima were to pioneer the route up to the southeast ridge, so that Tenzing and I could conserve our strength for the following day. At eight forty-five they tied on the rope, heaved their loads onto their backs and turned on their oxygen. George Lowe had three oxygen cylinders and a few pieces of equipment, making a load of about forty-five pounds. Gregory was using an oxygen set containing a wire-wound steel cylinder and this, together with a primus cooker, solid emergency fuel and food, came to about forty pounds. Ang Nyima had forty-one pounds of light alloy oxygen cylinders. Despite their slow, laboured pace, there was an air of relentlessness about the three as their bulky shapes started to move up the icy slopes towards the mountain.

I turned away and started to pack my own load. Into a light cloth bag I forced a sleeping bag, an air mattress, spare socks and gloves, a pullover, two spanners for the oxygen sets, two masks and tubes for our sleeping oxygen, a pencil and paper, two boxes of matches and some sticking plaster. The assault ration had been carried on ahead, but I added some food that I was sure I would like: two packets of dates, two cans of sardines, a half-used carton of honey, a few packets of lemon crystals and, most precious of all, a can of apricots in syrup. I had carried most of this food up from Camp IV and had kept it carefully concealed from the ravenous eyes of my companions. Although reason told me that most of this food wasn't really essential, I couldn't summon up the courage to part with any of it. I eyed it all gloomily. Including my oxygen set, camera and exposure meter, it probably weighed nearly fifty pounds. Tenzing's personal gear and food must have given him a substantial forty-three or forty-four pounds.

We didn't plan to leave until ten o'clock, so with a glance up at the first party, who were gradually gaining height, we crawled back inside the tent and tried to get some life back into our hands. In a strange mixture of English and Hindustani, Tenzing told me of the miserable time the two Swiss expeditions had spent on the South Col,

of how cold they had been, and how solid fuel had proved too inefficient to heat enough water for their moisture-starved bodies. Through his story I saw the vast respect and admiration he held for the Swiss guide, Lambert. Tenzing told me that after the two Swiss expeditions he had been reluctant to return with the British party. But now he felt fit and strong and was keen to try to reach the summit.

At ten o'clock we crawled out of the tent and tied up the entrance, asking Pemba to keep an eye on the tents. We heaved our loads onto our backs and I felt my shoulders sag under the strain. We put on our oxygen masks and as the oxygen flowed into my lungs my load seemed to lose half of its weight. I quickly picked out the first party—three black dots a third of the way up the great couloir leading towards the southeast ridge. They seemed hardly to move at all. With sinking feelings, I glanced at Tenzing—a formidable figure in his bulky garments—and his nod showed he was ready to leave.

I led off, dropping down to the lowest point of the South Col and then slowly ascending the ice slope leading towards the mountain. As the slope steepened, I could feel the drag of altitude which even the oxygen couldn't banish. But soon the dreadful weakness disappeared and I achieved a slow, rhythmical pace that carried me steadily upward. Work at these altitudes can rarely if ever be a pleasure—every step demands so much conscious physical and mental effort. And yet, when I could look back and see the South Col tents dwindling beneath us, I experienced a glow of achievement that made all this effort seem worthwhile.

We laboured on, bodies bent well forward to counter our burdens. A short distance ahead of us, cutting right across the slope, was a great crevasse. As we came up to it we noticed with relief that its lower lip was flattened out. There was ample room to sit down and have our first good rest since leaving camp. We turned off our oxygen, removed our masks and sat there quietly drawing in great long gulps of cool fresh air. I looked up the couloir and I could just distinguish an ice axe swinging rhythmically in the hands of George Lowe. Apparently they were striking a lot of hard going and a bout of step-cutting. We reluctantly got to our feet, crossed the crevasse by a substantial ice bridge and started tackling the slope.

As the angle of the slope increased, we zigzagged our way upwards in order to give some relief to overburdened legs and lungs. But we were gaining height relatively quickly. The slope changed from ice to snow, but the snow had been packed by the wind into such a hard surface that we obtained little relief. The angle steepened still more

and I was just about to start chipping some steps to give our ankles a rest when I came on a fine line of steps already made by George Lowe. I grunted with satisfaction and started cramponing up them.

Technically, the climbing was steep but not particularly difficult. All the same, the cumbersome loads on our backs made it hard to maintain good balance in the small steps. I couldn't help glancing down the long hard slope underneath us and mentally assessing the consequences of a slip. "Well, I don't think you'd kill yourself, but you wouldn't be feeling too bright by the time you hit the bottom" was my estimate. I concentrated more carefully on the route ahead. The line of steps rose in a series of great zigzags to the foot of the couloir. Every thirty or forty steps we'd stop and rest, our chests on a bent knee, to give our backs and lungs a chance to recover. The slope seemed endless.

We were shocked into attention by a new problem. There was an ominous whirr from above and we instinctively ducked. Next moment we were clouted by a stream of ice and snow chips falling at great speed. I looked up and saw that we had reached the foot of the great couloir and that high above us George Lowe was cutting another long line of steps. By the time the debris from his ice axe reached us, it had achieved an uncomfortable—and perhaps dangerous—velocity. We hastily retreated out of danger. It would be unsafe for us to enter the couloir until the others had got out of it. There was no comfortable place to rest, so we chopped out little terraces for ourselves in the hard snow, thrusting our ice-axe shafts deeply into the slope to act as anchors. I checked my watch and found to my amazement that we'd only been going for about an hour and twenty minutes. We turned off our oxygen and I examined our sets to make sure they were operating at a constant rate. The others were now trying to get out of the couloir up the rocks on the right, to the southeast ridge.

As soon as they were clear of the couloir Tenzing and I stood up again and tried to loosen our cramped muscles. We turned on our oxygen and commenced our slow but steady progress up the steps. The couloir was an impressive place with vertical rock bluffs towering over it on either side. Underneath us the slope ran in a great sweep of a thousand feet to the tiny tents on the South Col. As we climbed upwards I could pick out from the shape and spacing of the steps the stretches when Gregory, and on one occasion Ang Nyima, had been giving George Lowe a change with the step-cutting. George is an adept with the ice axe and when we left his

steps it was like turning off the main highway onto a rather bumpy side road—you got along it all right, but it tended to cut down your speed. With George's great stairway to go up we made rapid progress. We reached the crest of the slope to see George's party only fifty feet away sitting on some rocks.

Just in front of us was one of the loneliest sights I have ever seen. On a little snow shelf perched the tattered remnants of a small tent, a few frayed rags of fabric flapping pathetically in the breeze. I turned to Tenzing and gestured towards the tent and he smiled and shrugged his shoulders. He wasn't likely to forget the night he'd spent there with Raymond Lambert, without drink or food or even sleeping bags. We continued on up to the ridge, turned off our oxygen, and sat down with our companions.

We were at a height of about 27,000 feet. Free of our packs, George and I scrambled around excitedly, taking photographs like a couple of novices on our first climb. It was encouraging to find how fit we were feeling. Reports from previous expeditions indicated that at over 27,000 feet, whether you are wearing oxygen masks or not, you feel listless and weak. But moving around, even without oxygen, we felt strong, and confident that we'd establish Camp IX very high on the mountain. We seemed to have reached our best acclimatization at the same time.

I checked all the oxygen sets, and then we started off again. About 150 feet above us was our first objective—the equipment John Hunt had carried up for us several days before. The ridge was covered with a light layer of snow and we often had to feel around for reliable ledges, but it was a ridge which we knew was going to be a lot more dangerous to come down than it was to go up—the experience of Evans and Bourdillon had shown us that.

When we came upon the dump—an impressive pile of oxygen bottles, a tent, food and fuel, all of it essential for our high camp—we sat down and looked at it. To add this to our loads was going to give us burdens far heavier than it was thought possible to carry at this altitude, even using oxygen. And there was also the difficulty of attaching this gear to our already-bulky loads. There were two particularly troublesome objects: a Meade tent weighing fourteen and a half pounds and an oxygen bottle weighing twenty pounds. It was obvious that one of us was going to have to carry more than the others because of the peculiar size of the objects. Finally I said, "George, I'll take the tent if you'll do the route-making up the ridge." George commented that I wouldn't be much use the next

day if I carried a load of over sixty pounds up the ridge. But there was no alternative. The oxygen bottle was tied onto Gregory's load after we'd taken away most of his food and the cooker; George put a third bottle of oxygen onto his frame, together with Gregory's excess gear; and Tenzing took another oxygen bottle. They now had over fifty pounds each. Ang Nyima wasn't going quite so strongly as the rest of us, so we left him with his original forty pounds.

I squatted down and put my arms through the shoulder straps of my pack and then, grunting with effort, tottered to my feet. I felt as though I was being crushed into the earth. I'd carried sixty-three pounds and more many times in New Zealand, but carrying such a load at 27,400 feet made quite a difference. I put on my oxygen and shouted to George: "OK, George, I'm right! You do the work and I'll follow in the rear." George grinned cheerfully. Then, bent under his own enormous load, he led off up the ridge. Every step now was a major task requiring a maximum of effort. Our eyes continually searched the ridge ahead for the next foothold. Instead of striding like giants, we were now stepping like pygmies, and any lift of more than six inches was too much for our straining legs and lungs. But despite this we were making progress.

The ridge came to a short, steep bluff. We climbed it very slowly and with difficulty; Gregory was groaning with the effort and Ang Nyima had to be helped up with a tug on the rope. At the top we rested for a moment then George, who was in wonderful form, moved on. The ridge broadened onto a steep snow slope and George's ice axe started swinging again. We were getting desperately tired. Our eyes searched anxiously for a tiny ledge—any place on which we could pitch a tent. We were getting very high indeed and already, behind us, Lhotse was dropping away. Gregory was putting up an astonishing performance. He'd always been a tough little man and an excellent acclimatizer, but we had never looked on him as much of a load carrier, and here he was carrying fifty pounds at nearly 28,000 feet. But he appeared at the absolute limit of his strength.

Ahead of us the ridge seemed to level off a little. George arrived there first and his violent gesture indicated complete disgust: it was far too steep for a camp. We crowded up together and discussed things. In the next 200 feet the way steepened considerably and formed a great bluff with a snowy cap. The bluff looked far too difficult—we would have to get around it on the left. We could see no campsite between us and the snowtop, but the only thing to do was to keep going.

With faint hope I asked Tenzing if he remembered the ground from the previous year. To our surprise he told us that he thought there was a place only fifty feet above us, but well out to the left. I moved aside to let Tenzing through and he led off over a very steep snow slope which channelled down thousands of feet to the Western Cwm. We scratched our way up a very steep little gully from which powder snow hissed away in a small avalanche. Then a shout and a pointed arm from Tenzing showed that we'd reached his campsite. We climbed eagerly up, only to have our hopes crushed. It was a little snow saddle, flat, but with barely enough room for two of us to sit, let alone pitch a tent.

Suddenly, George shouted and pointed upwards. About fifty feet up the slope there seemed to be a more promising ledge. As we climbed slowly towards it my spirits rose. It certainly wasn't flat, but it was extensive enough and sufficiently well protected to give us a chance to make something of it. I looked at my watch—2:30 pm. "This'll do," I shouted, and the others were only too eager to agree. Tenzing told us that this was about as far as he'd got with Lambert the previous year.

We took off our packs and started to remove the gear that was to stay up here. We'd already used more oxygen than we had planned, so the descending party decided to try to get down with practically nothing. But the three of them were obviously so tired that without oxygen the slopes below could well be their undoing. Gregory still had a little oxygen left, so I rummaged around among our supplies and found two half-full bottles. Despite George's protestations, I pressed these on them. Just as they were about to leave, Ang Nyima asked if he could stay with us that night in order to help us down the next day. This demonstration of loyalty and unselfishness from a man who was obviously going to have great difficulty in getting down at all seemed to epitomize the Sherpas. With a lump in my throat I thumped him on the shoulder in appreciation and shook my head. A hearty handclasp with them all and Gregory led off wearily down the mountain. I felt an intense feeling of loneliness as they slowly clambered down, leaving us on our little ledge.

Their trip down the mountain was a marathon of endurance. After a long time they reached the couloir, only to find that most of their steps had been wiped out by wind-blown snow. Fortunately George had enough strength left to complete a line of steps to safety and then, with remarkable enthusiasm, he went on ahead so that he could film the others coming into camp completely exhausted.

After watching our support party disappear down the ridge, I turned to examine our campsite more closely. Above us was a cliff, black and craggy. At the foot of the cliff a little snow slope ran at an easy angle for eight or nine feet to the top of the steep, exposed south face of the mountain. This little slope was to be our campsite, and it was going to need a lot of work on it before we could possibly pitch a tent. We set to work with our ice axes to remove the surface snow from an area about eight feet long and six feet wide. Ten inches down, we struck rock. The slope underneath was made up of stones and rubble all firmly glued together with ice. This was much harder going. With the picks on our ice axes we chopped away, prising out stones and scraping away rubble. We found we could work hard for periods of only ten minutes or so; then we'd have to stop for a rest. With the debris we chopped out of the slope we tried to build up a platform on the downhill side, but almost invariably saw it collapse and go roaring down over the bluffs below. At times we were buffeted by wind and snow. Yet we worked doggedly on, knowing that a tent was our only chance of survival against the night.

By 5:00 pm we had managed to construct two little terraces, each about seven feet long and three feet wide. The top one was about six inches higher than the other, but we determined to use them as they were. We unrolled the tent and almost lost the poles over the edge in the process. We joined the four collapsible poles together and pushed them into their slots at each end of the tent so that they formed a rigid A. I blessed the ease with which Meade tents could be erected. We pulled the tent up so that it straddled the two ledges and set to work to anchor it, but this was difficult to do as there were no large rocks to which we could tie a guy line. I tried driving aluminium tent pegs into the frozen slope, but they refused to penetrate at all. In desperation my eye lighted on some oxygen bottles. I tried stamping and packing them firmly down a couple of yards away from the tent. After a good deal of work they gave the appearance at least of stability, and I attached the main guy rope round them.

Tenzing had been tackling the problem in a different manner. A number of smooth fingers of rock were jutting outwards from the bluff above. Round these fingers Tenzing had tied a web of rope, hoping that friction would keep it in place. At my look of doubt he gave me the line; even under a hearty jerk it remained attached. We tied down the rest of the guy ropes so that the tent stood up reasonably well to the fierce gusts of wind already blowing.

It was now about 6:00 pm and the view in every direction was

superb. The great giants, Makalu and Lhotse, were bathed in a warm red light and seemed almost close enough to touch. The valleys were hidden by fleecy clouds with only an occasional icy fang thrusting up, glowing in the setting sun. Far below us was the Western Cwm, already filling with the gloom of night, and on the South Col I could just pick out the tiny group of tents.

I set to work to check the oxygen supplies. The whole plan of attack was based on Tenzing and me starting off from Camp VIII with two full bottles of oxygen each and using it at the rate of four litres a minute. I sorted through the bottles and my heart sank. I checked them all again—and I was right. We had only two full bottles left, and two about two thirds full. Aghast, I did some mental arithmetic—at four litres a minute we had only about five and a half hours of oxygen left. Then I remembered how well we'd come up with heavy loads on four litres a minute. Perhaps we could go on, if necessary, on three litres a minute? This would give us just over seven hours' endurance. I adjusted the sets to three litres.

I planned to use the large oxygen bottle that Gregory had carried up for sleeping purposes. But I couldn't find the special adapter for it anywhere. After a thorough search I realized that someone must have carried it down again and that the oxygen in the large bottle was useless to us. I examined the remaining partly-filled bottles. There was only enough oxygen in them to give us four hours of sleep. I decided to space this through the night from 9:00 to 11:00 pm and from 1:00 to 3:00 am. We had one thing in our favour in respect to oxygen—while Bourdillon and Evans were on the first assault, they had jettisoned two partly-filled bottles of oxygen on the ridge about three hundred feet above us. If we could find these, they'd prove a valuable addition to our limited endurance. It was getting very cold now, so I crawled inside the tent.

Tenzing was sitting on the upper ledge at the far end with the cooker on the bottom ledge between his feet. A thin cloud of steam was coming from it. The tempting aroma of chicken noodle soup surrounded us and before long we were drinking it down with great relish. Rather astonishingly, perhaps, for this altitude, we were really hungry. Out came all our delicacies—we had sardines on biscuits, fresh dates, and as a special treat I produced my can of apricots. But our main sustenance was our hot lemon drink fortified with heaps of sugar. The very heavy breathing that such altitudes demand means the body is expelling a tremendous amount of water vapour in the breath and unless this is replaced, extreme fatigue and collapse will

ultimately result. When we'd finally drunk all our bodies could hold, we started settling down for the night.

I took a last look outside and dragged our sleeping oxygen into the tent. Every star shone with a cold steady light in the clear sky. Our prospects for tomorrow looked excellent. The only worrying feature at the moment was the occasional gusts of wind which shook and rattled our tent. Tenzing blew up his air mattress, crawled inside his sleeping bag—boots and all!—and settled calmly down to rest, seemingly quite unaffected by the fact that the edge of the tent beside him overhung the tremendous south face of the mountain.

I pushed my air mattress into the narrow space on the upper ledge, changed into dry socks, then debated whether to wear my boots inside my sleeping bag and so have an uncomfortable night and warm boots in the morning, or whether to have a comfortable night and frozen boots. The flesh was weak and I decided on a comfortable night. I put on some warm down socks and then wriggled inside my bag. There wasn't enough room for me to lie flat out on the ledge, so I squatted across my air mattress with my head against the wall of the tent, my feet straddling Tenzing's legs. It wasn't really a very comfortable position, but I was thankful to have a tent over my head at all. I connected up an oxygen bottle to our sleeping masks and turned the oxygen on. Tenzing turned out the stove and the tent became dark.

As I lay there breathing slowly and deeply on our tiny supply of oxygen, my mind drifted to the next day. Could we endure climbing on three litres a minute? And, if we did get to the south summit, would we be able to make a route along the summit ridge about which Evans and Bourdillon had painted such a gloomy picture? I didn't know any of the answers, but lying in the darkness inside the tent, warm and comfortable, it was difficult to realize where we were—on a narrow ledge far higher than anyone had ever camped before.

All of a sudden I heard a whistling roar from higher up the ridge. I braced myself quickly and next moment a gust of wind hit us like a battering ram and the whole tent shook. Tenzing started up in alarm as the gust reached a crescendo of fury. Then, to our relief, it completely died away. Ten minutes later another gust signalled its approach by a roar like an express train high above us. After that the gusts thrashed at us with monotonous regularity, but the tent seemed to be withstanding them reasonably well and so under the beneficent effects of the oxygen we dozed off.

I woke suddenly with my mind clear and active but my body

shuddering with the cold. I realized immediately that our oxygen must have run out. The wind seemed to have dropped completely and there was a deathly quiet everywhere, broken only by Tenzing turning restlessly inside his sleeping bag. "He's cold, too," I thought. I looked at my watch—it was eleven o'clock. We were spending the next two hours without oxygen and there was no sense in being too miserable, so I suggested we got the cooker going to try to warm ourselves up with a hot drink. Tenzing was quick to agree and before long our faithful stove was steadily melting ice. I rummaged around for some biscuits and piled hard, granulated honey onto them. Any form of sugar, as long as it wasn't too sickly, tasted good. And then we started drinking great mugs of "lemonade". Soon it was 1:00 am and time for our second dose of oxygen. While Tenzing put the cooker away, I connected up another bottle, and then we settled down, and I dozed once more.

It was absolutely still outside when our oxygen finally ran out at about 3:00 am. I lay there for a long time miserably cold. At four o'clock I forced myself to move. The tent door was frozen stiff as a board, but finally the tapes came undone and I could push the door aside. I looked out onto a cold, hard world, but an incredibly beautiful one. The early-morning light was already outlining the icy peaks which stretched from horizon to horizon. The valleys below were dark and sleeping. Tenzing looked over my shoulder and suddenly grunted and pointed downwards—"Thyangboche". Sure enough, there in the great wide Imja valley we could see the faint outlines of the monastery perched in its lovely setting, about 17,000 feet below us. Already, we knew, the monks there would be performing their early-morning devotions and perhaps, as they had promised to do, they were at this moment turning their eyes up towards us and praying for our well-being.

The thermometer read nearly seventeen degrees below zero Fahrenheit. Not too bad really, for this altitude. Tenzing worked on the cooker while I checked all the connections and dials, and they seemed in good order. Once again we tackled food with enthusiasm, trying to get as much moisture into our bodies as we could.

My boots were frozen iron hard and it was impossible to get them onto my feet. I put the stove between my knees and started to cook my boots in its fierce heat. I finally ended up with boots that were somewhat singed, but at least malleable enough to go onto my feet. Tenzing and I rubbed our faces with cream to protect them from the wind and sun. We were wearing all the clothes we possessed—string

singlet, woollen shirt, Shetland wool pullover, woollen underclothes, down trousers and jackets, and over them all strong windproof trousers and jackets with hoods. On our hands we had three pairs of gloves—first silk, then woollen, then windproof. To protect our eyes we wore sunglasses.

The night before, I had put a new roll of colour film in my camera. Now I tucked the camera carefully inside my clothes and zipped up my windproof. We were ready to leave!

SUMMIT

At 6:30 am we crawled out of the tent and stood on our little ledge. Already the upper part of the mountain was bathed in sunlight, warm and inviting, but our ledge was dark and cold. We lifted our oxygen onto our backs. My thirty-pound load seemed to crush me downwards, but when I turned on the oxygen, the burden seemed to lighten and the old urge to get to grips with the mountain came back. We strapped on our crampons and tied on our nylon rope.

I looked at the way ahead. From our tent, steep slopes covered with deep powder snow led up to a prominent shoulder on the southeast ridge, about a hundred feet above our heads. The slopes were in the shade and breaking trail was going to be cold work. Still worried about my boots, I asked Tenzing to lead off. With powerful thrusts of his legs he forced his way up the slope in knee-deep snow, and I followed.

We climbed out over the tremendous south face of the mountain, and below us snow chutes and rock ribs plummeted thousands of feet down to the Western Cwm. Starting in the morning straight onto exposed climbing is always trying for the nerves and this was no exception. In my imagination I could feel my heavy load dragging me backwards down the great slopes below; I seemed clumsy and unstable and my breath was uneven. But Tenzing was pursuing an irresistible course up the slope in the deep snow and my nerves soon relaxed. As we gained a little height we moved into the rays of the sun, and although we could feel no appreciable warmth we were greatly encouraged by its presence. Taking no rests, Tenzing led out onto the snow shoulder; we were now at a height of 28,000 feet. Towering directly above our heads was the south summit, and to the right were the enormous cornices of the summit ridge. We still had a long way to go.

I felt warm and strong now, so I took the lead. Ahead of us the ridge was sharp and narrow, but it rose at an easy angle. On the righthand side of the ridge loose powder snow was lying dangerously over hard ice. Any attempt to climb on this would only produce an unpleasant slide down towards the Kangshung glacier. But the lefthand slope was better, with a firm surface of wind-blown powder snow into which our crampons would bite readily. Taking every care I moved along onto the lefthand side of the ridge. Everything seemed perfectly safe. With increased confidence I took another step. The next moment I was almost thrown off-balance as the wind-crust suddenly gave way and I sank through it up to my knee. I gradually pulled my leg out of the hole, and was almost upright again when the crust under the other foot gave way and I sank back with both legs enveloped in soft loose snow to the knees. It was the mountaineer's curse—breakable crust. Sometimes for a few careful steps I was on the surface, but then the crust would break and I'd be up to my knees again. For half an hour I continued in this uncomfortable fashion, with the violent balancing movements completely destroying my rhythm and breath. It was a great relief when the snow condition improved and I was able to stay on the surface. I came over a small crest and saw in front of me a tiny hollow on the ridge. And in this hollow lay two oxygen bottles. It was Evans's and Bourdillon's dump.

Wrenching one of the bottles out of its frozen bed I wiped the snow off its dial. It was nearly a third full. I checked the other—it was the same. This was great news. It meant that the oxygen we were carrying on our backs only had to get us back to these bottles instead of right down to the South Col. It gave us more than another hour of endurance. I explained this to Tenzing through my oxygen mask and he nodded enthusiastically.

I led off again. The ridge climbed more steeply now, then broadened out and shot up at a sharp angle to the foot of the enormous slope running up to the south summit. I crossed over onto the righthand side of the ridge and started chipping a long line of steps up to the foot of the great slope. Here we stamped out a platform for ourselves and I checked our oxygen. I had a little more oxygen than Tenzing, which meant I was obtaining a slightly lower flow rate from my set, but there was nothing I could do about it.

Ahead of us was a really formidable problem: rising from our feet was an enormous slope, slanting down onto the east face of Everest and then climbing up steeply to the south summit of the mountain,

four hundred feet above us. The lefthand side of the slope was a most unsavoury mixture of steep loose rock and snow, which my New Zealand training immediately regarded with grave suspicion, but which Evans and Bourdillon had ascended on the first assault. The other route was up the snow itself and still faintly discernible here and there were traces of the track made by the first assault party, who had come down it in preference to their line of ascent up the rocks to the left

The snow route it was for us! There looked to be some tough work ahead, and as Tenzing had been taking it easy for a while I hardheartedly waved him through. With his first six steps I realized that the work was going to be much harder than I had thought. His first two steps were on top of the snow, the third was up to his ankles, and by the sixth he was up to his hips. But he drove himself onward, almost lying against the steep slope, ploughing a track directly upwards. Even following in his steps was hard work, and after a long and valiant spell he was plainly in need of a rest, so I took over.

Immediately I realized that we were on dangerous ground. On this steep slope the snow was soft and deep with little cohesion. My ice-axe shaft sank into it without any support. A thin crust of frozen snow made progress possible, but was a poor support. I was forcing my way upwards when suddenly an area of crust all around me about six feet in diameter, broke off into sections and slid with me, back through three or four steps. I stopped, but the crust, gathering speed, slithered on out of sight. It was a nasty shock. My training told me that the slope was exceedingly dangerous, but at the same time I was saying to myself, "Ed, my boy, this is Everest—you've got to push it a bit harder!" I was tight with fear as I ploughed on. Halfway up I stopped, exhausted. I could look down ten thousand feet between my legs and I have never felt more insecure. Anxiously I waved Tenzing up to me.

"What do you think of it, Tenzing?" And the immediate response, "Very bad, very dangerous!" "Do you think we should go on?" And then there came the familiar reply that never helped you much but never let you down: "Just as you wish!" I waved him on to take a turn at leading and we made our unhappy way upwards, sometimes sliding back and never feeling confident that at any moment the whole slope might not avalanche.

Then I noticed that, a little above us, the lefthand rock ridge turned into snow which looked firm and safe. Laboriously we climbed across some steep rock, and I sank my ice-axe shaft into the

snow of the ridge. It went in firm and hard. The pleasure of this safe belay was like a reprieve to a condemned man. Strength flowed into my limbs. I started chipping a line of steps upwards—it was very steep but seemed so gloriously safe. Tenzing, an inexperienced but enthusiastic step-cutter, took a turn and chopped a haphazard line of steps up another pitch. The slope was starting to ease off. Tenzing gallantly waved me through and with a growing feeling of excitement I cramponed up some firm slopes to the rounded top of the south summit. It was only 9:00 am.

I looked at the vital ridge leading to the true summit, the ridge about which Evans and Bourdillon had made such gloomy forecasts. At first glance it was an exceedingly impressive—indeed a frightening—sight. In the narrow crest of this ridge, the rock had a thin capping of snow and ice—ice that reached out over the east face in enormous cornices, overhanging and treacherous, only waiting for the careless foot of a mountaineer to break it off and crash ten thousand feet to the Kangshung glacier. From the cornices the snow dropped steeply to the left to merge with the enormous rock bluffs which towered eight thousand feet above the Western Cwm.

But as I looked my fears started to lift a little. Surely I could see a route there? This snow slope on the left, though steep and exposed, was practically continuous for the first half of the ridge. If we could make a route along that slope we could go quite a distance at least.

With a feeling almost of relief I cut a platform for myself just down off the top of the south summit. Tenzing did the same and then we removed our oxygen sets and sat down. The day was still remarkably fine and we felt no discomfort from either wind or cold. We had a drink out of Tenzing's water bottle and then I checked our oxygen supplies. Tenzing's bottle was practically exhausted. Mine still had a little in it, and we each had a full bottle. To reduce weight I decided to use only the full bottles so, laying the two exhausted bottles in the snow, I carefully connected them up. They held just over eight hundred litres of oxygen each. At three litres a minute this meant a total endurance of nearly four and a half hours. This didn't seem much, but if necessary I would cut down to two litres a minute for the homeward trip.

I stood up and took a series of photographs in every direction then thrust my camera back to its warm home inside my clothing. I heaved my now pleasantly light oxygen load onto my back and connected up my tubes and did the same for Tenzing. I asked Tenzing to belay me, and with growing excitement I cut a broad,

safe line of steps to the snow saddle below the south summit. I wanted an easy route when we came back here weak and tired

To my astonishment the snow on the steep slope on the left side of the ridge was crystalline and hard. A couple of rhythmical blows of the ice axe produced a step that was strong and safe. Conscious of the great drops beneath me, I chipped a line of steps for the full length of the rope—forty feet—and then forced the shaft of my ice axe firmly into the snow. It made a fine belay and I waved to Tenzing to join me. As he moved along the steps I took in the rope. When he reached me, he thrust his ice axe into the snow and protected me with a tight rope as I went on cutting steps. It was exhilarating—the summit of Everest, the crisp snow and the smooth easy blows of the ice axe all combined to make me feel a greater sense of power than I had ever felt at great altitudes before.

We were now approaching a point where one of the great cornices was encroaching onto our slope. We'd have to go down to the rocks to avoid it. I cut a line of steps steeply down the slope to a small ledge on top of the rocks. There wasn't much room, but it made a reasonably safe stance. I waved to Tenzing to join me. I had been so absorbed in the technical problems of the ridge that I hadn't thought much about Tenzing. But now as he came down to me it was obvious that he was breathing with difficulty, and was in considerable distress. I immediately suspected his oxygen set and helped him down onto the ledge so that I could examine it. The first thing I noticed was that long icicles were hanging from the outlet of his mask. I looked more closely and found that the outlet tube was almost completely blocked up with ice, preventing him from exhaling freely. Fortunately the outlet tube was made of rubber and by manipulating this I was able to release the ice. The valves started operating and Tenzing got immediate relief. My own set, I found, had partly frozen up too, but not sufficiently to have affected me a great deal. Automatically I looked at our pressure gauges. We had nearly four hours left. That meant we weren't going badly.

I looked at the route ahead. This next piece wasn't going to be easy. Our rock ledge was right on top of an enormous bluff running down into the Western Cwm. Almost under my feet I could see a dark patch on the floor of the Cwm, which I knew was Camp IV. Above was the cornice. The rock was far too steep to attempt to drop down and go round it. The only thing to do was to try to shuffle along the ledge and cut handholds in the bulging ice that was trying

to push us off it. Held on a tight rope by Tenzing, I cut a few handholds and then thrust my ice axe as hard as I could into the solid snow and ice. Using this to take my weight I moved quickly along the ledge. It proved easier than I had anticipated. I was able to cut a line of steps up onto a safe slope and chop out a roomy terrace from which to belay Tenzing as he climbed up.

We were now approaching the most formidable obstacle on the ridge—a great rock step. On the Everest reconnaissance in 1951 we had seen this vertical wall quite clearly with glasses from Thyangboche. We had always thought it could well spell defeat. I cut steps across the last snow slope and then commenced traversing over a steep rock slab that led to the foot of the step. The holds were small and hard to see and I brushed my snow glasses away from my eyes. Immediately I was blinded by a bitter wind laden with particles of ice. I hastily replaced my glasses and blinked away the ice and tears.

I dropped down into a tiny snow hollow at the foot of the step and Tenzing joined me. I looked anxiously up at the rocks. Planted squarely across the ridge in a vertical bluff, they looked extremely difficult, and I knew that our ability to climb steep rock at this altitude would be severely limited. I examined the route to the left. By dropping a hundred feet over steep slabs, we might be able to get round the bottom of the bluff, but there was no indication that we'd be able to climb back onto the ridge again. In desperation I examined the righthand end of the bluff. Overhanging it was a large cornice. In preparation for its inevitable crash down the mountain-side, a long narrow vertical crack had formed between the rock and the ice. The crack was large enough to take the human frame. I made up my mind that it was worth a try. Tenzing had an excellent belay and we must be near the top.

I produced my camera once again. I had no confidence that I could climb this crack, and with the competitive pride which unfortunately afflicts even mountaineers I wanted proof that at least we had reached a good deal higher than the south summit. I took a few photographs and then checked the oxygen. Three and a half hours to go! I examined Tenzing's belay to make sure it was a good one and then slowly crawled inside the crack.

In front of me was the rock wall, vertical but with a few promising holds. Behind me was the ice wall of the cornice, glittering and hard but cracked here and there. I took a hold on the rock in front and then jammed one of my crampons hard into the ice behind. Leaning

back, I slowly levered myself upwards. Searching feverishly with my other boot, I found a tiny ledge on the rock and, leaning back on the cornice, I fought to regain my breath. Constantly at the back of my mind was the fear that the cornice might break off, and my nerves were taut with suspense. But I forced my way up—wriggling and jamming and using every little hold. And then I was reaching over the top of the rock and pulling myself to safety. The rope came tight—its forty feet had been barely enough.

I lay on the little rock ledge, panting. Gradually it dawned on me that I was up the step and I felt a glow of pride and determination that completely subdued my feelings of weakness. For the first time I really knew I was going to get to the top.

When I was breathing more evenly I leaned over the edge and waved to Tenzing to come up. He moved into the crack and I gathered in the rope and took some of his weight. Then he, in turn, struggled and forced his way up until I was able to pull him to safety. We rested for a moment. Above us the ridge continued, with enormous overhanging cornices on the right and steep snow slopes on the left running down to the rock bluffs. But the angle of the slopes was easing off.

I went on chipping a line of steps, but thought it safe enough for us to move together in order to save time. The ridge rose up in a great series of snakelike undulations which bore away to the right, each one concealing the next. I had no idea where the top was. I would cut a line of steps round the side of one undulation and another would come into view. We were getting desperately tired. Tenzing was going very slowly, and my confidence was beginning to evaporate. Bump followed bump with maddening regularity. A patch of shingle barred our way and I climbed dully up it and started cutting steps round another bump.

And then I realized that this was the last bump, for ahead of me the ridge dropped steeply away in a great corniced curve, and out in the distance I could see the pastel shades and fleecy clouds of the highlands of Tibet. To my right a slender snow ridge climbed up to a snowy dome about forty feet above our heads. But all the way along the ridge the thought had haunted me that the summit might be only the crest of a cornice. It was too late to take risks now. I asked Tenzing to belay me and I started cutting a cautious line of steps up the ridge. Everything seemed solid and firm, so I waved Tenzing up to me. A few more whacks of the ice axe and we were on the summit of Everest.

ADVENTURE'S END

My first sensation was one of relief that the long grind was over; that the summit had been reached before our oxygen supplies had dropped to a critical level; that in the end the mountain had been kind to us, with a pleasantly rounded cone for its summit instead of a fearsome cornice. But mixed with the relief was a vague sense of astonishment. It seemed difficult at first to grasp that we'd got there. Then, as the fact of our success thrust itself more clearly into my mind I felt a quiet glow of satisfaction spread through my body. I turned and looked at Tenzing. Even beneath his oxygen mask and the icicles hanging from his hair I could see his infectious grin of sheer delight. I held out my hand and in silence we shook in good Anglo-Saxon fashion. But this was not enough for Tenzing. Impulsively, he threw his arm around my shoulders and we thumped each other on the back in mutual congratulations.

But we had no time to waste! First I had to take some photographs and then we'd hurry down. I turned off my oxygen and took the set off my back. I remembered all the warnings I'd had of the possible fatal consequences of this but for some reason I felt confident that nothing serious would result. I opened my camera, clipped on the lens hood and ultraviolet filter and then shuffled down the ridge a little so that I could get the summit into my view finder. Meanwhile Tenzing unfurled the flags wrapped around his ice axe and held them above his head. What a dramatic picture he made!

I climbed up to the top again and started taking a photographic record. Wherever we looked, icy peaks and sombre gorges lay beneath us like a relief map. Perhaps the view was most spectacular to the east, for here the giants Makalu and Kanchenjunga dominated the horizon. The view to the north was a complete contrast—hundreds of miles of the arid high Tibetan plateaux, softened now by a veil of fleecy clouds into a scene of delicate beauty.

Almost under our feet, it seemed, were the famous North Col in Tibet, and the East Rongbuk glacier where so many epic feats of courage and endurance were performed by earlier British expeditions. It was sobering to remember how often these men had reached 28,000 feet without the benefits of our modern equipment. My thoughts turned to Mallory and Irvine, who had lost their lives on the mountain thirty years before. I looked around for some sign that they had reached the summit, but could see nothing.

Meanwhile Tenzing had also been busy. He'd scratched out a little hole in the snow and in this he placed some small offerings of food—biscuits, a piece of chocolate and a few sweets—a small gift to the gods of Chomolungma which all devout Buddhists believe to inhabit the summit of this mountain. Beside the food, I placed the little cross that John Hunt had given me on the South Col. Strange companions, no doubt, but symbolic at least of the spiritual strength and peace that all peoples have gained from the mountains. As I put my camera away my fingers seemed to grow clumsy, and I suddenly realized that I was being affected by the lack of oxygen—it was nearly ten minutes now since I'd taken my set off. I quickly checked the gauges on our bottles—nearly two hours at three litres a minute. It wasn't much, but it would have to do. I hastily put my set on and turned on the oxygen. I felt better immediately. Tenzing had removed the flags from his ice axe and thrust them down into the snow. We slowly got to our feet again. My tension and worry about reaching the summit had gone, leaving a slight feeling of anticlimax. But the smallness of our supply of oxygen filled me with a sense of urgency. We had to get back to the south summit as quickly as possible.

I glanced at Tenzing to see if he was ready, and then looked at my watch. It was eleven forty-five, and we'd only been on top fifteen minutes. I descended forty feet from the summit to the first rocks and taking a handful of small stones thrust them into my pocket. It seemed a bit silly at the time, but I knew they'd be rather nice to have when we got down. Then I set off along the ridge. Fortunately my steps were intact and we cramponed along them quickly and safely. In what seemed an astonishingly short time we were climbing down towards the top of the difficult rock step. I could see from here the frail fashion in which the cornice was attached to the rocks, but with the confidence of familiarity I plunged down into the chimney and wriggled my way to the bottom. Tenzing quickly followed and we climbed on again. The ridge was now much steeper and more exposed, so we moved on one at a time, each man belaying the other as he moved. Once again I could see far below us in the Western Cwm the dark smudge of Camp IV, and I thought how pleased they'd be at our news. Slowly I climbed up the stairway I'd whacked out in the icy side of the south summit nearly four hours before. I sat down and Tenzing joined me there. It had taken us only one hour from the top.

Once again I checked our oxygen bottles—there was only about

an hour's supply left, but this should get us down to our reserves on the ridge. Tenzing offered me his water bottle and I had a long swig. It was a delicious brew of water, sugar, lemon crystals and raspberry jam. I looked back up the ridge and saw that our steps were clearly outlined in the snow, so I got out my camera again and photographed them. Our rest was very short, only a few minutes—then we were on our feet again and starting down.

The thought of this descent had never been far from my mind throughout the day. It had seemed so difficult and dangerous on the ascent that I was afraid that when we came down it tired and less alert, one of us might slip and precipitate a disastrous avalanche. I started cramponing carefully down the steep slopes of frozen snow. The wind was now a good deal stronger and occasional strong gusts made us feel uncomfortably off-balance. Now the unpleasant moment arrived and we had three hundred feet of steep and dangerous snow to deal with. First of all, we had to get onto the slope, and this entailed a traverse over some steep rocks. Tenzing belayed me carefully and, using every meagre handhold I could find, I inched my way along, very conscious of the tremendous drop beneath. When I looked down all my earlier fears returned. Ten thousand feet below us was the avalanche-strewn Kangshung glacier, coldly and impersonally waiting to receive a toppling cornice or a careless climber. I hastily shrugged these morbid thoughts out of my mind and started packing the loose snow into a little ledge so that I could belay Tenzing across the rock pitch. He moved slowly onto the traverse and laboriously began to work his way over. With a sudden shock I realized how tired he was—how tired we both were! It seemed a long time before he joined me.

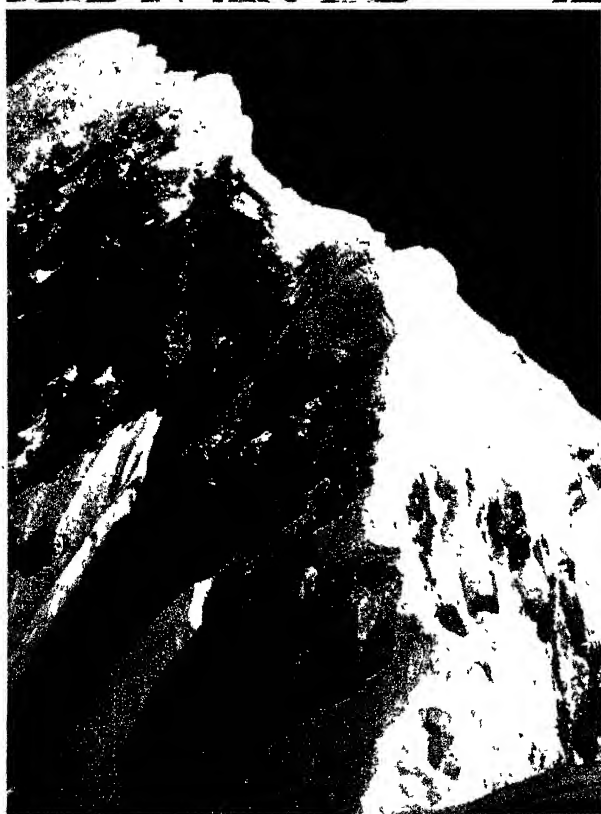
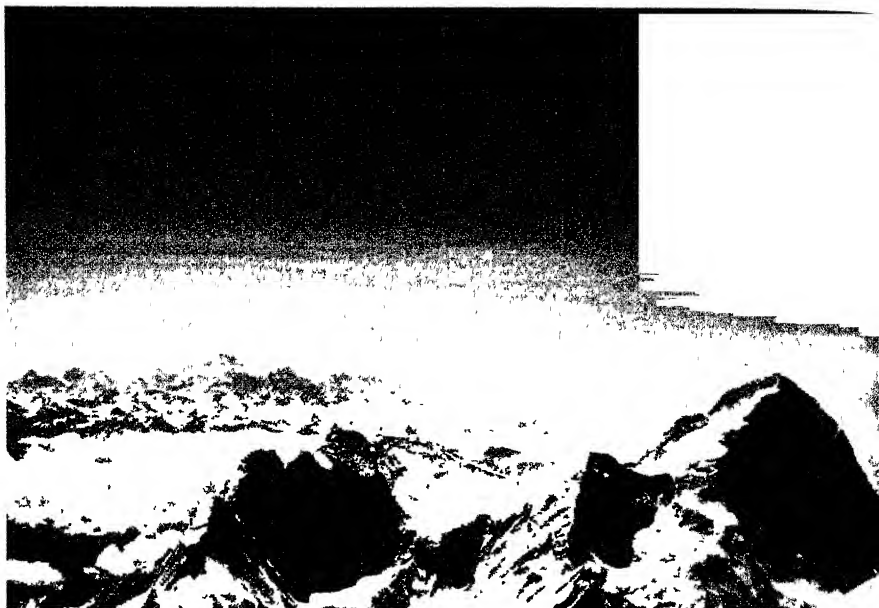
With a tense feeling in the pit of my stomach I started down the slope, packing the loose snow with my boot into a step that would take my weight. Each time I changed my weight into a new step I had a moment of fear that it would not hold. I glanced behind. Grimly silent, Tenzing was climbing down the steps with great care. He was obviously tired but was still strong and safe. I went on packing steps and lowering myself into them. Time lost its meaning and the great slope turned into an eternal and endless nightmare. Then suddenly I realized we were nearly at the bottom. Thankfully I stepped onto the ridge again and sank the shaft of my ice axe into the firm snow. I took in the rope as Tenzing moved up beside me. We looked at each other and we didn't need to speak.... Our faces clearly showed our unrestrained relief.

Almost casually I started down the ridge—it seemed so easy after what we'd just come down—but a sudden fierce gust of wind brought me sharply to my senses and I started concentrating again. I knew our oxygen must be nearly exhausted and I pushed on as hard as I could. When we reached the oxygen dump I checked the sets on our backs. We still had a few litres of oxygen left, so we continued on down carrying the lifesaving reserve bottles in our hands. The ridge broadened and I realized we'd reached the snow shoulder above Camp IX. I plunged down the steep slope, sidled round a rock bluff, and then saw our tent only a hundred feet away. I moved eagerly towards it but suddenly my boots were as heavy as lead. I realized that my oxygen bottle had run out. I climbed slowly onto our tent platform, took off my oxygen set and slumped down in the snow. Tenzing sat down wearily beside me. It was good to be back.

Our tent was flapping furiously in the wind and already many of the guy lines had come undone. While Tenzing got the cooker going for a hot drink, I connected up our last meagre oxygen reserves. I reduced the rate of flow to two litres a minute and tested out both sets. Gusts of wind were whipping across the ridge, pelting me with stinging snow, but I was too tired to worry very much. Far below on the South Col I could see the tents flapping and thought I saw some figures moving. It was nice to know there was someone there to help us, but it looked a long way down. Tenzing handed out a large mug of warm, sweet lemon-flavoured water and I drank it with relish. We rolled up our sleeping bags and our air mattresses, and tied them onto our oxygen sets. We needed them for sleeping in the lower camps. And then, with no feelings of regret, I took one last glance at the forlorn little camp that had served us so well and started off down.

There were no tracks visible on the slopes below us, but I knew that once we had worked across onto the ridge we could stick to it until we reached the remains of the highest Swiss camp. I forced a deep trail across the slope, conscious of the weakness in my limbs. The ridge dropped away in an unhealthy-looking sweep of snow-covered rocks. I knew Evans and Bourdillon had had some unpleasant slips on this part of the ridge and I was determined that we shouldn't do the same. We moved down carefully but steadily. It wasn't particularly difficult, just rather unpleasant. Our first objective was the remnant of the Swiss tent about 700 or 800 feet below us. For a long time it never seemed to get any closer, but all of a sudden it grew much larger and there we were, right beside it.

Now we had to branch off to the right to the head of the great



*The conquest of Everest
When Hillary took this
photograph of the summit
edge (left), only four men
had seen it and none had
set foot on it. The view from
the summit (above) was
magnificent, with the
peaks of Makalu and
Kanchenjunga visible to
the east.*



Tenzing at the summit. On his ice axe is fluttering a string of flags : British, Nepalese, United Nations and Indian. Tenzing himself had never used a camera and was unable to photograph Hillary.

snow couloir leading down to the South Col. We crossed slowly over easy snow and rock slopes to the little rock ledge which gave access to the couloir, and then we looked down at our last problem—the long steep slopes beneath us. With a start I realized there wasn't a step showing—for some reason I had expected George Lowe's steps still to be intact. My heart sank! I was dead tired and had no desire for another bout of step-cutting. I tried the snow with the hope that it would be soft enough to kick steps down it, but it was as hard as a board. I had no alternative but to start cutting again. I had only chipped down about ten feet into the couloir when I heard a high-pitched roar from the bluffs above us and next moment I was hit by a terrific gust of wind and almost torn from my steps. I braced myself against the slope, digging the pick of my ice axe into the hard snow as a belay. After a few moments the wind disappeared as quickly as it had come.

I went on cutting step after step and Tenzing moved into the couloir behind me but a few moments later we were once again buffeted unmercifully by a powerful gust. It seemed as though the couloir was acting as a wind tunnel, intensifying the wind to dangerous proportions. I continued hacking a path downwards, but when I'd done over 200 feet I'd just about had enough. Tenzing—tired though he was—offered to take a turn and cut down for nearly another hundred feet. Then he moved ten feet out to the right and started kicking steps down a softer layer of snow. Thankfully I moved down behind him and we lost height quickly. I noticed that a small figure had appeared on the icy slopes above the South Col and somehow I knew it was George Lowe. We rested at the crevasse at the foot of the couloir and then moved on again. We knew we were safe now, and with the disappearance of our tension the last of our energy went too. But stiff-legged and weary we thumped on down automatically.

George's tall strong figure was now much closer and the thought struck me that there wasn't anyone I'd rather tell the news to first. George and I had had a lot of success together and we'd had our tough moments; no one had done more than George to make this final success possible. Already I could see his cheerful grin and next moment his strong vigorous voice was shouting out a greeting. In rough New Zealand slang I shouted out the good news and next moment we were all talking at once and slapping each other on the back. For the moment at least I quite forgot that I was at 26,000 feet with a fifty-mile-an-hour wind whistling around my ears. George

*Hillary and
Tenzing relaxing
after the ascent,
having just
arrived back at
Camp IV.*



produced a thermos flask of hot soup, which was rapidly consumed. He also had a spare bottle of oxygen with him, but we didn't use it. Tenzing and I took off our rope and continued on down the ice slopes towards the Col. As we climbed slowly up the few feet to the tents we were met by Wilfrid Noyce and Pasang Phutar, who had come up to act as a support party.

We took off our packs and crawled into the tents. A few moments later I was revelling in the warmth and comfort of my sleeping bag and feeling a wonderful sense of security and companionship. George had a cooker going and was melting some ice for drinks. We called to Noyce to come in out of the wind, but he told us of an arrangement he'd made with John Hunt. In the event of our success he was to put two sleeping bags in the form of a T (meaning Top) on a snow slope on the edge of the South Col where it could be seen with binoculars from Camp IV. It was so cold and windy outside that George and I tried to dissuade Wilf from doing it. But realizing how anxious the main party down in the Western Cwm would be to know the news, Wilf refused to be deterred by our weak-kneed suggestions. He collected two sleeping bags and a puzzled Pasang Phutar and crossed over to a suitable snow slope above the Cwm. The wind was strong, so Wilf lay down on one bag himself and persuaded Pasang Phutar to lie on the other. For ten long minutes they lay there in the bitter South Col wind before Wilf felt they'd done their duty. It was unfortunate that during this ten minutes either nobody at Camp IV was looking or a cloud had come in between, so the message didn't get through.

The next morning was the same as every other morning on the South Col. I opened my eyes to a scene of complete chaos: remnants of food, dirty stoves and repulsive-looking mugs with the residue of our last drink frozen solid in the bottom, all strewn around and between our three recumbent bodies. I looked at George. With his bedraggled beard, scaly wind-blown countenance, burned lips and bloodshot eyes, he fitted perfectly into this depressing scene. "I suppose that's how I look," I thought, "or worse! It's about time we got out of here!" Wilf Noyce didn't move. He'd slept with his head outside the door owing to the lack of room and we suspected we were going to have to thaw him back into life.

Reluctantly we emerged from our bags and overcame the lethargy of altitude long enough to light a cooker. Soon we were crouching around the stove like a bunch of haggard old witches, slowly munching away at some food and drinking water as quickly as we could melt it. There were two full bottles of oxygen left and, though none of us really needed it, we decided that Tenzing and I should use it on the way down. We were each carrying our own sleeping and personal gear and it made a formidable load, as we started painfully up the slopes above the camp. We had only two hundred feet to climb, but it seemed like a thousand.

We looked back at the South Col—three tiny tents flapping furiously in a grim expanse of bare ice and black rocks. They looked awfully lonely down there. We turned away and started down towards the great traverse. The steps made by the parties of the previous day were still intact and this made travelling relatively easy. But there was no pleasure in it. All I wanted was to get back to safe ground and have a long rest, and it seemed a lifetime before we started cautiously descending the steep ice of the upper Lhotse Face.

For some reason I had the impression that Camp VII was going to be deserted, but as we appeared in sight we heard a hearty yell. Next moment we were the centre of an excited, chattering group. Mugs of hot lemon drink were thrust into our hands and our loads taken off our backs. It was good to be back amongst friends. We rested for half an hour while the Sherpas dismantled the tents. Then George and Tenzing and I roped together and started off down. We made quite good time down the familiar steps and fixed ropes to the site of Camp VI. Another brief rest and we moved on again. Below the camp, the great glistening ice bulge demanded care, but holding onto the 400-foot-long fixed rope we cramponed our way to the bottom. We followed the track numbly—too tired to remember much of its steep

descents and exposed traverses—and collapsed on the snowy ledge at the foot of the face. The track from now on was merely a matter of putting one foot in front of the other, but we found even this was hard work. As we approached Camp IV we saw a few figures drifting slowly out of the tents towards us, obviously undecided as to whether we'd been successful or not. But when we were fifty yards away, George couldn't restrain himself any longer and waved his ice axe exuberantly towards the summit. The approaching figures stopped dead, as though unable to grasp the import of this signal, and then they rushed up the track towards us. Mike Westmacott reached us first and then John Hunt, his tired face lighting up with unbelieving joy. It was a touching and unforgettable moment.

But I couldn't help feeling sadness at the thought that it was all over. I could remember so clearly Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon, weary to death, dragging themselves down to the South Col; and John Hunt's lined and indomitable face as he handed me his tiny cross while the wind battered our tent; and the feeling of terrible loneliness as George Lowe and Gregory left us high on our little ledge.

And then, at the last, Tenzing's smile of triumph on the summit!



SIR EDMUND HILLARY was born in New Zealand in 1919. After his conquest of Everest he was knighted in 1953, and went on to further achievements in mountaineering and exploration. In 1958 he led a successful overland expedition to the South Pole. In 1966, with public subscription, he built the first hospital for Sherpas in the Everest area. He is the author of several books and an autobiography, *Nothing Venture, Nothing Win*.

“Sir, your daughter has been kidnapped by us and we now hold her for ransom. She is quite safe, if somewhat uncomfortable . . . Barbara is inside a small capsule buried in a remote piece of soil. She has enough food and water and air to last seven days. At the end of the seven days the life-supporting batteries will be discharged and her air supply will be cut off.”

So began the chilling ransom letter addressed to Robert Mackle, a wealthy Florida businessman. As he rushed to raise the half-a-million-dollar ransom, Barbara did indeed lie under the earth in a cramped wooden box. Already feverish from flu, she was suffering torments of damp, cold and loneliness. Hours passed. . . .

This book is the absorbing and gripping story of a remarkable young girl's courage and endurance.

CHAPTER ONE

I DIDN'T HEAR THE KNOCK. Mother's bed was closer to the door and she was up already when I awoke. Someone was outside our motel-room door. Mother was talking to him. I didn't know what time it was. I knew it was still night. I remember the first thing Mother said, "Oh, no, no, no."

"What's the matter?" I asked.

She turned towards me and said, "Stewart has been in an accident."

She started to unbolt the night latch. I said, "Mother, don't open the door." I don't know why I said it. I just didn't want her to open the door.

"Barbara," she said, "there is a policeman outside and Stewart has been in an accident."

I saw the gun before I saw the man. As mother unbolted the latch, the barrel poked through and at the same time the man flung open the door. It slammed her back against the wall. The gun in his hand looked like a rifle to me.

He was a big man, in a leather jacket of some kind, a yellow sweater, I think, and dark pants. He wasn't mean-looking, I remember. He wasn't a hoodlum. He held open the door and suddenly this other person rushed in under his arm. I thought it was a little boy. The boy had on a ski mask.

I wasn't scared exactly. You know how sometimes you are so astonished that you are completely calm? That's how I felt. Mother was angry, not hysterical, angry. She gets excited. "Oh, for heaven's sakes," she said. "Take our money and take our jewellery, and get out of here!"

The man said, "We won't hurt you. Get over there and sit on the bed. Put your hands behind your back. We're going to tie you up but we won't hurt you."

Distinctly, pronouncing each word very deliberately, mother kept saying, "Get out of here! Take it and get out!"

The man put the gun to my head. The small figure, the boy I thought, had Mother on the other bed, first tying her hands behind

her, then her ankles with white rope. He was very quick. Mother was talking the whole time.

"Be quiet!" the man said

I put my hands behind my back. I thought he would tie me up too. But he said, "No. We are not going to tie you up "

For the first time I began to get scared. I couldn't see what was going on exactly. Mother was struggling. The boy was pushing her down on the bed, and he had a rag to her face.

"It's a harmless anaesthetic," the man said. He said it at least three times. "It won't hurt you. We're not going to harm you. It's a harmless anaesthetic."

I guess I believed him. I knew Mother was being chloroformed. I said, "Mother. Don't fight them! Don't fight them!"

She didn't say anything. I didn't think she was under. It seemed as if she was still struggling. Then the man grabbed my arm, and pulled me to my feet and we started for the door. The boy raced out with us. The whole thing couldn't have taken more than two or three minutes.

I didn't know what to think. The man had the rifle in one hand and he held me with the other. A car was right there, parked head-in at the motel, the headlights off. I didn't recognize the make of the car. The man put me in the back seat. The boy, the small figure, jumped into the back seat with me.

"Don't do anything wrong and you won't get hurt," the man said. "I've got the gun and I'm not afraid to use it."

My thoughts were all jumbled. The man is reasonable, I thought. He is very calm and very cool. These people could be trying to get even with Daddy or something like that. I didn't think any further. I wasn't thinking about what might happen to me. I felt I could talk them out of it. I really did.

Right away, before we even pulled out of the driveway, the man said, "Chloroform her!"

I didn't want to be chloroformed. Very quickly I said, "That's OK. I'll put my head down. I won't look at anybody. I don't want to see what you look like."

Without waiting for an answer, I put my head down. I put my head down in this boy's lap. I was cold and shivering. I was shaking so. I put my arms around his waist and held tightly. He seemed so small.

The driver didn't say anything. He just pulled out. This was the Rodeway Inn on Clairmont Road just northeast of Emory

University in Atlanta, Georgia, where I was a twenty-year-old junior studying economics.

Suddenly I felt a hand on my face. "Oh, she is sick. She has a fever."

It wasn't a boy's voice at all. It was a girl's, with a very distinct Spanish accent.

Those were her first words, "Oh, she is sick." I knew I was sick. I had the flu. Everybody had the flu. That's why my mother was taking care of me at the motel. I couldn't get into the infirmary at Emory.

I tried to get up. The girl pushed me down and started to chloroform me. I pushed the rag away and said, "No, no, no," and I put my head down again in her lap. I lay perfectly still.

The man spoke up again. "This is going well," he said, pleased with himself, cackling almost. "This is going extremely well."

He sounded so conceited, as if it was some sort of a game with him. He was having a good time really. I struggled to get up again. I knew I couldn't get away lying down. I was thinking, I'll try to open the door and jump. He got mad then. "Chloroform her!" he shouted. "Put it on her mouth. Keep her head down!"

The girl pushed me down hard. I was shaking. I was very cold. My teeth were chattering. "Oh, she is cold and she is sick," the girl said, and she started to rub my arm. "We won't hurt you," she said. "Just do as he says. We won't hurt you."

I felt some attachment for the girl at this point. I don't know if it was because she was a girl or because she appeared so nice. If I'm going to get away, she'll help me somehow, I thought. She seemed so sympathetic.

We were going fast. By this time I had started thinking kidnap. Kidnap for ransom. It just jumped into my mind. Then I thought, no, that can't happen to a twenty-year-old girl. Kidnapping is for children.

From the motion of the car, I knew we had turned hard to the left. An abrupt turn. And I felt him run over railroad tracks. He turned again and it was real bumpy. Then he stopped. The entire ride hadn't taken fifteen minutes.

He leaned back from the front seat and said, "I thought I told you to chloroform her."

"She has been good," the girl said.

He looked at me and said, "Well, you'd better be good. Remember, I got the gun." He got out of the car, and I sat up. He

opened the back and I realized I was in a station wagon. The back end was full of stuff. I couldn't tell what.

"I'm looking for the flashlight," the man said. Now I could see exactly what he looked like. He was fat and big, real big, you know, husky. I wasn't tremendously afraid of him. In a devilish sort of way, he was an attractive man. The girl was all in black, and that knitted ski mask. I could see her eyes in the slit. I remember seeing her eyes very clearly. They were green and they were close-set. That was all I could see.

The man said, "Keep her head down so she doesn't see the house." Then he walked away into the night.

And I thought, a house! They are going to put me in a house. I knew I hadn't seen a house. I saw nothing but black.

Now, I thought. Here is my chance to get away.

She must have known what I was thinking because she produced the chloroform rag. "Please don't try to get away," she said. "Don't do anything because we are not going to hurt you, I promise. I'll take care of you."

Soon I could hear him walking back. "Jake and the boys dug the hole too deep," he called.

That's when I thought they are going to kill me and bury me in the ground. I said to myself, there has to be something I can do instead of lie here and let it happen. Maybe if I can get away they won't come after me. He won't start shooting. There is a house there. My head was still down and I decided, OK, I'll run.

I jumped up and there he was, right at the window. He had the flashlight shining in my face.

"I thought you were going to behave yourself," he said.

"I can't breathe, sir," I said. "I've got to get up. My nose is stopped up. I can't breathe."

I'm not sure about the exact sequence of things. He was away once again, when the girl said, "Oh. You're so cold. Here, take my sweatshirt." And she took off her black sweatshirt. She had on a Peter Pan shirt underneath, I think.

I said, "Thank you. It is so much better." And I said, "You are so nice to me." I was trying to play up to her.

And she said, "But, oh, you are so nice and sweet." She said it twice. She said, "You are so well-mannered."

I was saying, "Yes, sir, no, sir." I always do.

"You are so well-mannered," she said again. "You are such a nice girl." It was all so insane.

I kept thinking I could talk them out of it. He was standing outside the car when I put the sweatshirt on. Then he climbed into the back seat, flashing the flashlight in my eyes.

"I want to explain this," he said to me. "I suppose you know you are being kidnapped."

I sort of said, "Uhh uhh." I didn't say anything really.

"We are asking quite a bit of money," he said, and he emphasized the "quite", and he sort of chuckled. "It may take some time to get it," he said.

"Now," he said, "listen carefully to what I am going to tell you. I'm going to give it to you once and only once. You'd better get it. We are going to put you into an underground room. It is big enough to walk around in. But you can only get your air through a battery. And this battery will run seven days. You have a light down there and if you use the light the battery will run out in five days..."

He kept right on talking. An underground room? A battery? I couldn't believe it. It didn't make sense.

He said, "There is a house nearby and we'll come and check you every two hours." Then he said, and this didn't make sense either, "You will be under water."

I might have misunderstood. Maybe he said under the water table.

He said, "There is a pump in there. And if the water starts to come in, turn the pump on. A red light will go on in the house. A buzzer will go on in the house."

I thought, this man is crazy. I couldn't conceive of any room where I could walk around which was under water. In Atlanta, Georgia? The man is crazy.

"Now, if you put the pump on, you'll use up the battery a lot faster." And he started reciting some exact figures. He went into all kinds of detail. He said something about a ventilation fan and a life-support system and hours and amps. I can't even change a fuse. I simply didn't know what he was talking about. I was begging and pleading. "Please, I'll be good. You can't do this." I was beginning to panic.

He asked me, "Do you understand the instructions?"

I said, "No! No! I don't."

"All right," he said, and he was threatening. "One more time. This is it."

And he began to tell me again, only much quicker, not so much detail. He used the word "capsule". But I thought he was going to

put me in a room. A room big enough to walk around in. He told me if I tried to break out, insects would crawl in. I risked being eaten by ants. That is what he said.

“Don’t use the light,” he said. “Only when you have to. Don’t use the light and you will have air enough for a week.”

I was trying to think. “Daddy will pay the money,” I said. “Listen, you don’t have to do this. Daddy will pay the money. Please, don’t bury me.”

“Don’t worry, Barbara,” the girl said. “We’ll come check you every two hours. I’ll be right there.” She sounded so sincere. I realized she knew my name.

Then he said, “I want your watch. I want everything you have that is metal.”

I had on a long flannel nightgown, and underneath I had panties, that’s all. I also had on an old pair of my brother’s black socks. That was because I had the flu and my feet get cold at night.

He put the flashlight beam on the bow of my nightgown. “How is that bow connected?” he said. I think it had come off in the laundry and it had a safety pin. He took it off.

“You can’t do this,” I was saying.

Then he saw the ring on my finger. “This is what is going to identify you for your father,” he said, and he took my hand and tried to get it off.

It was an opal with two little diamond chips on the side. He pulled and twisted and I said, “I’ll get it off. Let me.” He was getting very impatient.

I was so scared that I didn’t feel how tight it was. I was thinking, I’m going to keep my watch. He had forgotten my watch. I slipped it up my arm.

I was still trying to reason with the man. I just couldn’t imagine someone wanting to bury someone alive. For what reason? There was a house nearby. I really believed this, absolutely.

He said, “You know, we are not in this alone. We have people down in Miami and up here, too. We have lots of contacts. It is not just us.”

Then he turned to the girl and said, “Give her the shot now.” To me he said, “We are going to give you a shot which is only half strength. It is going to numb your senses, make you feel that you don’t care what happens to you.”

She had a syringe, and hypodermic needle, and she pulled my gown up and my pants down.

"Good God, girl," he said "Is that all you've got on?"

That's when he turned away. It didn't hurt at all. I was so scared maybe that's why I didn't feel it.

He turned around again and said, "OK. Everything is ready. Pretty soon it is going to take effect. You won't care what is happening."

I said, "Yes, I will care." I kept thinking, this isn't going to happen. I am going to talk these people out of this.

He said, "I want you to chloroform her. And this time do it!" And she did.

"Just be good," she said. "We won't hurt you."

I didn't breathe. I turned my face to the side and I held my breath and I fell back and pretended to collapse.

He put the flashlight in my face and lifted my eyelids. "She is faking!" he cried. "She is faking! Give it to me."

He pushed me down against the back seat and held me. The chloroform was on a cloth of some kind and it was heavily saturated. I was struggling, but he was too strong. He hurt. It started affecting me.

Things were going round. Everything was black. I heard loud noises in my head. I remember trying to grab his hand and push it away and I couldn't. I don't know if I lost consciousness or not. Then he finally quit. I could still hear them talking.

He said, "OK, let's get going." I felt him pick me up. He was having trouble getting me out of the car. He pulled me out on the driver's side. And as he took me out, he found the watch on my arm and he stopped and took it off.

I was completely limp. He carried me no more than ten or twelve feet and put me down. The ground was grassy, I think, but I felt as if I was on a blanket. I was lying on my back. I could see some pine trees. Tall trees. I'm not sure.

"We're going to take your picture now," he said. "Smile."

I opened my eyes and now they were standing together in front of the car. The headlights were on and he had a camera.

He put a cardboard sign under my chin. I couldn't read it. Then he said, "Now, smile. Smile." I didn't smile.

The flash went off and he took a picture and they waited. I guessed it was a Polaroid. In a little bit, he said, angrily. "This won't do! Your eyes are closed." I didn't mean to close my eyes. It just happened.

"Now, open your eyes this time!" he said. He was impatient again.

I just had to smile. I was thinking, if Daddy saw it, I didn't want him to think they hurt me. The camera flashed again.

"You are a good-looking girl when you smile," he said. That's what he said. Here he was, one minute so impatient, the next trying to make a joke out of it.

I could see them both in the headlights and now the girl didn't have her mask on. I saw her short hair. She looked like a nice person, I thought. Small, but not fragile.

He came over and he wrapped me up in the blanket. He just folded it over. He picked me up and he had a hard time carrying me. He couldn't keep his balance. I felt some branches brush across my shoulders. We were in a forest or woods or somewhere. I remember the girl was walking behind.

I hadn't said anything in four or five minutes. It had taken that long to develop the Polaroid prints and everything. I was still woozy.

Then, abruptly, he put me down. He sort of sat me up on the ground. My feet were dangling over the side into a hole.

"I want you to slide down in there," he said, and he was pressing down on my shoulders.

Up until then I thought it was a room; certainly a place big enough to stand up and walk around in. He put me down and he said, "Now straighten out."

My feet were in first. I was sitting somehow. The blanket fell off. I still couldn't see anything in the darkness. I remember thinking when my feet hit, this is too short for a room. Well, I thought, this is a passageway or something leading to the room but, when I tried to straighten out, I couldn't. My feet wouldn't go all the way. And for the first time I could actually see. There was a light in there. I knew instantly it was a box.

I was petrified. I was never so frightened in my life. I guess I became hysterical. I cried, "No! No! You can't do this!"

The man stood there calmly, and said, "Don't be such a baby."

Then he became real angry. He said something about water. I heard him say water. And then he screamed, "You didn't fix it? Get down in there, Ruthie! Fix it!"

I remember the Ruthie. That's the only time I heard her name.

Slowly, very reluctantly, she climbed in right on top of me, actually on top of me. There wasn't enough room for two persons. My knees were up, and she was all over me, scrambling. I turned my face away. It was so unreal.

It was not just fear. It was disbelief. This is a dream, I thought.

This is not happening, and somehow, she scrunched up backwards and started out. I don't know how she got out. I don't know. I didn't see her turn around. She said, "Here is your drinking-water tube." I don't remember looking at it.

I was still woozy, but I knew I had to get out. I was getting up and suddenly the top came down. It made a heavy thud. I pushed against it as hard as I could. It didn't do any good. He must have been standing or kneeling on it.

My mind was racing and I guess I was screaming sort of. "You've got to let me out! Just a second! Wait! This is very important! I have to tell you something very important!"

I could hear him screwing in the screws in the lid. I don't know how long it took. "Wait! Wait! I have to tell you something!"

Then he said, "Be quiet and listen." I could hear him very distinctly. "Now turn on the fan. The switch is at the back of your head. This will bring fresh air in as long as the battery is running."

I reached up and found the switch on the left. I switched it on and it made a funny racket.

"It is not working!" I cried. "It is not working. Something is the matter with it."

He didn't say anything for a while, maybe for a few seconds. "No, it is all right," he said.

I said, "No! I can't work it. How do I do it? It isn't working."

"Don't worry," he said. "You are going to be all right."

Then I heard the dirt. I heard it falling. "No! Don't do this! Be reasonable! Listen to me!"

The first shovelfuls were very loud. After a while they became muffled. I don't remember any stomping or packing. I never saw a shovel. I was still talking. Then I tried to listen. I didn't hear anything. I thought, they've gone already. They've left me.

Then the girl, Ruthie, spoke up. "Barbara," she said. "Don't worry, Barbara, we'll be back every two hours."

She sounded so compassionate. I trusted her. I thought, if she said she'll do it, she'll do it. Desperately, I wanted to believe.

"Please come back. Come back and check me. Just talk to me."

And he said, "All you want is human contact." I heard him kind of laugh. "Human contact." That's the last thing he said.

"Yes," I said. "I do. I do."

After a while there was nothing. I couldn't hear anything. I pushed as hard as I could against the top. And I was hysterical. "Oh, God! You can't leave me here!" I'd talk, then be silent waiting for

an answer, then talk. There was nothing. Then I'd talk some more, begging, begging. And there was nothing. Only silence. That's when I knew they were gone.

CHAPTER TWO

Jane Braznell Mackle, mother of Barbara Jane Mackle, wife of Robert Francis Mackle, had checked into the Rodeway Inn, a franchised motel in Decatur, Georgia, suburb of Atlanta, four days earlier, on Friday, December 13, 1968. She was there for the sole purpose of taking care of her daughter, who had contracted flu in the midst of her final junior-year examinations. It had been a miserable weekend.

In the week before the kidnapping, Barbara had telephoned home twice from her small and shared corner room in McTyeire Hall, a dingy college dormitory with a communal bath down the hall. She was hoarse, her nose was stopped up, she had a headache and nausea, she ached all over, and she admitted she had a temperature of 101°.

Barbara's roommate Ramsey Owens had left that Thursday afternoon for Christmas vacation. Barbara, too ill to be alone, moved for the night into Smith Hall, another women's residence dormitory, and Jane Mackle caught the first non-stop flight from Miami to Atlanta the next morning. She took a taxi to the Rodeway Inn on the eastern border of Emory University's campus. She registered and was shown into room 137, which had two double beds.

After her mother telephoned to say that she had arrived, Barbara drove to the Rodeway Inn in her year-old Pontiac Firebird and went to bed. The car had originally belonged to Jane Mackle, but Barbara had more or less appropriated it for college. She could barely whisper. She had all her books with her and she was upset because she had lent her notes for her economics course to a boy who hadn't returned them and she needed them and couldn't find him.

She felt somewhat better Saturday. At the motel that evening the telephone rang about seven o'clock. Jane Mackle answered.

"I have a registered letter for Barbara Mackle." It was a man's voice. She didn't recognize it.

Quite mistakenly, Jane Mackle assumed that the boy who had borrowed the notes had mailed them to Barbara registered delivery at McTyeire Hall.

"Never mind," she said. "It's too late tonight. I'll stop by the dorm tomorrow." She thanked him and hung up.

Later that evening she talked to her husband in Miami and asked him if he perchance had mailed Barbara a registered letter. Assured not, she felt sure she was right about the notes.

That evening and again Sunday and Monday, Barbara's friend, Stewart Woodward stopped at the Rodeway Inn. Although there had never been a head-over-heels romance, they were quite close and fond of each other. Stewart Woodward, a senior majoring in business economics, was a year older than Barbara. They would go everywhere together, the movies, canoeing, horseback riding, bicycling.

On his way home to his apartment Saturday night in his white 1965 Ford, Stewart stopped at Barbara's dormitory to see if her notes had been returned. They were there waiting for her in a red looseleaf notebook. They had not been mailed. The boy who borrowed them had returned them himself. Stewart didn't think anything about it. Neither did Barbara or her mother when he brought the looseleaf notebook with him to the Rodeway Inn on Sunday. No one thought to mention the telephone call the night before.

All day Monday Barbara remained in the motel room in her bathrobe. The weather, damp and unpleasant, hung on unchanged for the fourth consecutive day, and the motel confinement had Jane Mackle climbing the walls.

"I'm tired of looking at that nightgown," she said. "I'll get you another one."

"I need socks, too," said Barbara.

Jane Mackle drove to McTyeire Hall where she began packing for the holidays. She picked up a pair of black woollen knee-high socks. Barbara had confiscated them months before from her brother Bob, a quiet young man three years older than she. He had graduated in 1967 from another school in Atlanta, the Georgia Institute of Technology. Their father, Robert, had been born in Atlanta.

At the Emory dormitory that afternoon, Jane Mackle also picked up the clean nightgown for Barbara. It was the one Grandma Del Braznell had given Barbara as a Christmas gift the year before, knee length, long sleeved.

On campus later, Jane Mackle noticed a man staring at her from another car. "Oh," she said to herself, "I know I'm parked wrong." She didn't give it a second thought.

That night of Monday, December 16, neither mother nor

daughter turned on the television before the eleven o'clock news. Barbara puffed up the pillow so she could keep her head up while sleeping. She had to breathe through her mouth.

Once during the night, Jane Mackle awoke and listened in the dark to Barbara breathing. It was three o'clock. For the next hour she lay in bed unable to sleep.

The knock on the door startled her. "Who is there?" she asked.

She thought he said a detective. He said, "There is a young boy in a white Ford and he has been in an accident. He is in the hospital and he is asking for you."

She immediately thought of Stewart, of course. "Is his name Stewart Woodward?" she asked.

"Yes, that's his name," the man replied.

From the still-darkened room she could see by the light of an ornamental lantern outside a clean-shaven man wearing a visored cap, lettered "Police". It had a badge on it.

As she unhooked the chained latch, the man abruptly shoulder-bashed open the door. A second figure, a boy of about twelve or thirteen she thought, tied her up.

Sprawled back on the bed, Jane Mackle struggled to keep from being chloroformed. She didn't inhale and didn't lose consciousness. Almost the second she quit fighting the boy raced out. She looked up and saw just a flickering of Barbara's nightgown going out the door between them.

Oh, my God, she thought, they are going to rape Barbara.

Frantically, Jane Mackle rolled across the bed to get the phone. It was on the floor. Somehow, she pitched herself to the floor, knocked the receiver off the hook and started screaming.

There was no response. She would have to dial for the night clerk and she couldn't.

Barefooted, wearing only a flannel nightgown, her hands and legs securely bound, Jane Mackle struggled to her feet, and hopped across the room. The door was ajar, and she hopped outside, oblivious to the twenty-four-degree chill.

"Help! Help! Help!" she cried. "Somebody help! Please help!"

No one responded.

The horn, she thought suddenly. She knew Barbara's Firebird was unlocked. Screaming still, she hopped from the sidewalk off the kerb to the road, retaining her balance.

At the right front door she fell. She staggered to her feet, sliding up against the car. With her hands behind her, she realized she had to

back towards the door handle, grab it and depress, and pull open the door.

Except for her own room, Jane Mackle could not see a single lighted window in the motel. Of the one hundred and twenty rooms in the motel, seventy-one were occupied that night.

Then she had the door handle in her hands. The door opened easily. She backed into the seat, plopped downwards, and put her chin on the steel rim of the horn and pressed hard.

Walter Perkins had worked as a night clerk for hotels for sixteen years. He hurried across the lobby, methodically locked the front door, hurried back across the lobby and let himself out the back door, carefully locked that door too, then sought the source of the disturbance.

"Hey, lady!" he shouted. "Shut up! You'll wake up all the guests!"

Jane Mackle lifted her chin. "For heaven's sakes, help me!" she said. "They robbed me and took my daughter."

"Calm down. Calm down," said Perkins. Ever the discreet innkeeper, he was interested in keeping the peace. He cut her loose.

She went back towards her room. Perkins hesitated. Unaccustomed to escorting ladies into motel rooms, he stood there in the open doorway.

She had to telephone the DeKalb County police herself. She asked Perkins for the number, and he looked it up for her. The police dispatcher in Decatur logged the call at 4:11 am.

The crime of kidnapping had not entered her mind. But Barbara's purse sat undisturbed on the floor. Jane Mackle's contained about \$150. It too was still there.

When she realized they hadn't robbed her, she knew they were after Barbara. All she could think of was rape.

Verging on hysteria, Jane Mackle telephoned Stewart Woodward. "Stewart," she said, "they've taken Barbara. Someone broke in and took Barbara. Can you come over right away?"

Young Woodward lived off-campus about five miles away. He was there in a few minutes. He didn't take the time to put on socks. The police were already there.

"How often do things like this happen in Atlanta?" Jane Mackle asked the two uniformed policemen. "I used to like Atlanta. Do you have many rapes in Atlanta?"

She wanted to telephone her husband. One of the policemen

suggested she wait, please. He wanted the descriptions again, slowly, please.

He wondered, as would other investigating DeKalb County detectives, if Barbara Mackle had fled of her own free will in league with her captors. Could it all be an elaborate ruse?

"I tried to tell them Barbara was a coed at Emory and a nice girl," Jane Mackle recalled. "And one of the policemen said very sarcastically, 'A coed at Emory a nice girl?' It really annoyed me. I was so upset anyway."

The two officers looked suspiciously at Stewart Woodward. "He's just a friend," Jane Mackle tried to explain. Somehow, in the emotions of the moment, they incorrectly concluded that Stewart was Barbara's fiancé.

Soon a plainclothes DeKalb County detective, Mac E. Dover, arrived and started asking all the same questions again. The two uniformed officers promptly departed to search dead-end streets, lovers' lanes, where a rapist might take a victim.

Stewart noticed the detective's cuff links, miniature handcuffs. He disapproved. Impatient, Stewart felt nothing was being done. Jane Mackle asked him to telephone her husband.

ROBERT FRANCIS MACKLE, fifty-seven, perceptive, decisive, with a southern friendliness of manner and a deep tan, looked the very personification of corporate prosperity. He and his two brothers, Frank, Jr., and Elliott, qualified easily as Florida's best-known home builders and land developers. Their company was called the Deltona Corporation, and Deltona stock would open at \$54 on the American Stock Exchange that morning of December 17, its assets listed at \$127,887,537.

Robert Mackle caught the telephone on the first ring shortly after five that morning at the Key Biscayne Hotel and Villas, which he and his brothers had owned since they built it in 1953. He always stayed there when his family was out of town, not liking to be at home alone.

He recognized Stewart's voice instantly. The boy had visited the family in Florida on three occasions.

"Something terrible has happened, Mr. Mackle," Stewart began. "I don't know of any way to tell you except come right out with it."

"What is it?" said Robert Mackle, abruptly awake.

He listened carefully. When Stewart had finished there was a pause. Robert Mackle did not respond immediately.

"How sure are you of everything?" he asked in disbelief.

"The police are here but they don't know what's going on."

"Just the local police?"

"Yes, sir."

"When I hang up, you call the FBI immediately and tell them to come right out. I want to put a lid on this. I don't want any publicity until we find out what's going on."

Robert Mackle had recognized instantly the nature of the problem. Almost instinctively, he reacted as he had to the lesser crises of his business. Keep quiet. Find out the circumstances. He knew it was serious. He also knew he needed help from a cool head, someone he could trust. He telephoned an employee of his company, Billy Dale Vessels. Vessels had worked for the Mackle brothers in a public and corporate relations capacity for ten years.

"I need you, Billy," Robert Mackle said. "Meet me at my home as soon as you can."

Billy Vessels, aged thirty-eight, was a compact bull of a man, with the power and swiftness of a football fullback. He dressed hurriedly and sped towards the darkened Mackle home. It was a five-minute drive.

Robert Mackle made a second hurried call. He called his brother Frank at the Plaza Hotel in New York City. Frank Mackle was in New York for a business appointment that day. In his turn, Frank telephoned Elliott, their other brother.

Robert Mackle drove the twelve miles from the hotel on the island of Key Biscayne to his home at 4111 San Amaro Drive, Coral Gables. He drove his new black-topped Lincoln Continental towards the mainland on Rickenbacker Causeway, a four-laned palm-lined strip of highway across Biscayne Bay. The tyres of the Lincoln whined loudly as they raced over the metal grating of the drawbridge of the causeway. As Robert Mackle put his foot to the brake and stopped for the red light just beyond the toll booth, he could see to his left the Miami Seaquarium advertisement. In fibreglass imitation, a huge tiger shark circled round and round.

CHAPTER THREE

I started screaming and pounding to try to get out. I guess I lost control completely. I don't think I'd recovered completely from the drug. I was screaming, "God, no, you can't leave me! God, you can't

leave me here!" I guess if there was a peak of terror, it was right after they left. That was it.

Then I started thinking, Now, look, Barbara, just calm down. This screaming and hollering will get you nowhere. This is ridiculous. Daddy will get the money. And they'll be back in two hours. In two hours, I thought, I'm going to think of something to make them let me out. I'm going to have the best story I ever thought of. I calmed myself down. I was still terribly scared, of course, but I started looking around. First I switched the fan on. I wanted to see if I could work it. I couldn't see the fan but I could hear it. It had to be in a compartment behind my head. The fan made a loud noise and, really, I was thankful for the noise. To hear nothing is horrible. I looked around and I could see a switch on the other side. I guessed it was for the pump. I saw the water tube and the barrels or whatever you want to call them at my feet.

I couldn't stretch out my feet. That was horrible. The lid was maybe twelve or fourteen inches over my head. If I rose up, I bumped it. Finally, I turned on my side and sort of folded up.

There was a red flowery sofa pillow. I saw a box of sanitary towels and decided to use it as a pillow. I stuffed the box behind my neck, then put the pillow on top of the box and sort of propped myself up. That's how I'd slept at the Rodeway, propped up so I could breathe. Under the box there were some instructions. I picked them up and read them very carefully. Everything was typed in capital letters.

It began: DO NOT BE ALARMED. YOU ARE SAFE. It then went on to repeat everything the man had told me and ended up with:

YOUR CAPSULE CONTAINS A BUCKET FOR REFUSE AND THE PRODUCTS OF YOUR BOWEL MOVEMENTS. THE BUCKET HAS AN ANTI-BACTERIAL SOLUTION IN IT. DON'T TIP IT OVER. THE LID SEALS TIGHTLY TO PREVENT THE ESCAPE OF ODOURS. A WATER JUG IS PROVIDED WITH THREE GALLONS OF WATER AND A TUBE FROM WHICH TO DRINK IT.

BLANKETS AND A MAT ARE PROVIDED. YOUR WARMTH DEPENDS ON BODY HEAT SO REGULATE THE AIR TO PREVENT LOSS OF HEAT FROM THE CAPSULE.

A CASE OF CANDY IS PROVIDED TO FURNISH ENERGY TO YOUR BODY, AND TRANQUILLIZERS TO AID YOU IN SLEEPING—THE BEST WAY YOU HAVE TO PASS THE TIME.

WE'RE SURE YOUR FATHER WILL PAY THE RANSOM WE HAVE ASKED IN LESS THAN ONE WEEK. WHEN YOUR FATHER PAYS THE

RANSOM WE WILL TELL HIM WHERE YOU ARE AND HE'LL COME FOR YOU. SHOULD HE FAIL TO PAY WE WILL RELEASE YOU, SO BE CALM AND REST—YOU'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.

I started reading the instructions again. "Do not be alarmed. You are safe." I laughed. I couldn't help myself.

So, OK, I'll have to turn the light out because I'm using too much battery. In a minute, not now. I began to think about Mother. Had she gotten away? I didn't think they had hurt her. I was hoping she hadn't called the police. That might make things worse. Mother is going to call Daddy at Key Biscayne. That's what she'll do, I thought.

When Daddy heard about me, I thought, he would get everyone working on it. He would call Bobby right away. Yes, I knew he would tell my brother because our family is very close.

I said to myself, everything is going to be fine. Everything is going to be all right. And I have to turn out the light. It was about the size of a Christmas-tree bulb, and it was in the top left corner of the box, and I reached for it. I could feel the heat. I turned it off.

Then I got scared, real scared. As a little girl I'd always been afraid of the dark. It was one of those unreasoning fears that I knew was stupid. But I couldn't help myself.

I started to tense up. I tried to put it out of my mind. But I had to turn it back on. I was angry at myself, but I had to. So I turned it on—and it didn't help. I could feel the panic building up.

I thought about the pump. He told me it would turn on a red light and buzzer in the house. The panic was getting unbearable. I turned on the pump. It made a horribly loud noise. I kept switching it on and off. I don't think I was too rational. In my mind I could see the light and the buzzer going on and off in the house.

They are going to come for me now, I thought. They'll think it is an emergency. I turned off the fan so I could listen and hear better. I listened for the footsteps. And there weren't any.

The panic subsided. I had a hold of myself. In that first hour or so in the box I would just get control of myself when the fear and the dread and the panic would start building up again. It came in waves. I could feel it coming. I started pounding. "Can you hear me? Help!" After a while, I would calm down again.

I had no conception of time. Right from the beginning I was waiting for those two hours to be up. So I decided, OK, I'll count seconds. Sixty seconds per minute for sixty minutes. That's three thousand and six hundred seconds and doubled, that's seven thousand and two hundred seconds. I started counting. It was a long count. I left the light on.

When I reached seven thousand and two hundred, I turned the fan off and listened. Nothing. Absolute silence.

Well, I thought, maybe I counted wrong. I'll start again at six thousand. I knew I couldn't possibly have missed that much. Six thousand and one; six thousand and two . . .

When I reached seven thousand and two hundred again I knew it had been more than two hours. That's when I realized that everything they said wasn't true. The pump didn't turn on a red light and buzzer anywhere. There wasn't any house. And they were not coming back. They were not ever coming back.

AS ROBERT MACKLE PULLED INTO the half-circle driveway to the front door of his house, he saw Billy Vessels waiting for him. Neither man spoke. Robert quickly unlocked the door. The Christmas wreath hung on it. They went into the marble entrance hall, with its antique glass chandelier hanging from the high ceiling of the stairwell.

"Tell me everything that has happened," Vessels said, and Robert repeated what little he knew. From a telephone in the game room, Vessels put a call through to room 137 of the Rodeway Inn.

Jane Mackle was terribly distraught. Her emotional condition disturbed both Robert and Vessels.

"Your place is with Jane," Vessels said when Robert hung up.

"My place is where I can get Barbara back."

"I think you should be with Jane," Vessels repeated. "She needs you."

Vessels telephoned Eastern Airlines. He asked for two first-class reservations. He decided he was going too.

"I don't want anyone telephoning Bobby," Robert said. It might not be necessary. It made no sense to call his son until he had to. His son was in Philadelphia in his first year at Wharton Graduate School of Business and Finance.

Elliott Mackle arrived about six thirty before having to go on to the Deltona office. Robert kept glancing at the telephone. Someone

had to be there to answer it. He thought of Jane's sister, Ann. She lived with her husband, Dr. William Briggles, a dentist, about four and a half blocks away. They were family. He telephoned them.

Bill Briggles had just stepped out of the shower

"Bill," Robert began, "don't say a damn word to anybody, but get some clothes on and get over right quick." Then his voice broke. "Here, talk to Billy Vessels."

Bill Briggles arrived at the Mackle home within five minutes. Vessels hurriedly flipped through family photo albums in search of recent pictures of Barbara which he figured the FBI might want.

Someone had to be there to answer every telephone call. "Bill," Robert said, "will you stay here until we get someone in?"

Robert and Vessels took off for the airport. Vessels drove. He knew he was in better condition to drive than Robert.

Back at the Mackle home Deltona's treasurer, William H. O'Dowd, had now been sent for. He waited near the telephone in the red-carpeted den. A quiet-spoken, six-foot-four-inch man of forty-seven, generally unflappable, he had worked for the Mackle organization since 1950. Elliott Mackle and the dentist, Dr. Briggles, left. "Don't use the telephone needlessly," Elliott had said. "Keep it open. I'll be at the office."

At 9:10 am the telephone rang. O'Dowd grabbed it.

"Robert Mackle?" It was a distinctive male voice.

"No," O'Dowd replied evenly. "He is on his way to Atlanta."

There was a long pause. "Well," said the voice, "tell him to look under a palm tree in the northeast corner of the house—under a rock about six inches down."

"Where did you say it was?" O'Dowd scrawled furiously.

"The northeast corner of the house."

"Don't go so quickly," said O'Dowd. "I can't take it down."

"That's all," the voice said. O'Dowd heard only the nothingness of a broken connection.

He hadn't recognized the voice. It was no one he knew. Immediately he dialled Elliott Mackle at the Deltona Corporation and repeated the message.

"Don't do anything," said Elliott Mackle. "Don't go outside and look yourself. Wait for the FBI. They're on their way over there now." O'Dowd thought it all seemed so improbable. Look for a palm tree and dig under a rock.

AT THE RODEWAY INN in Decatur two FBI agents stood on the walkway outside room 137. They already had registered and moved into the adjacent room 135. When Robert Mackle got out of the taxi that had brought him and Vessels from the airport he saw them but didn't stop. Vessels stopped.

Roger Kaas and William J. Watry introduced themselves. Kaas showed Vessels his credentials. They remained outside.

Robert put his arms around his wife and she sobbed on his shoulder. "If I hadn't opened the door," she wept. "Barbara tried to stop me." Her distraught condition shocked him, as did the rope burns and the abrasions. She kept blaming herself.

"Jane," said Robert, "we're going to get Barbara back."

Some moments later Robert Mackle stepped outside. Vessels introduced him to Agent Kaas. The phone rang. Agent Kaas returned to room 137, listened momentarily, and then: "It appears to be a genuine kidnapping," Kaas told Robert Mackle. "We know what we're dealing with."

When O'Dowd had telephoned the Deltona executive offices, his information about the rock and the palm tree had been relayed to the Miami office of the FBI. The Miami FBI, in turn, had notified both the Washington and Atlanta FBI offices.

Kaas wanted to know about palm trees in the northeast corner of the yard.

There were four in the backyard, three royal palms on the east side of the property under Barbara's upstairs bedroom window and, in the northeast corner of the property, five yards from the edge of the house, a clump of Phoenix palms, a dense decorative outgrowth of subtropical shrubbery, about five feet in diameter. "Somebody might call that a palm," Robert Mackle said.

AT THE DELTONA OFFICES FBI Agent Joseph St. Pierre asked James Vensel, Deltona's senior architectural engineer, to drive him to the Mackle home. Vensel knew the way and the home. Agent St. Pierre wanted to approach the house cautiously. Conceivably, the house could be under surveillance. St. Pierre and Vensel toured the neighbourhood, detecting nothing abnormal, and pulled into the Mackle driveway. O'Dowd was glad to see them. They talked briefly in the game room.

"You stay here," St. Pierre said. He strolled outside, inspected every palm tree on the premises. The clump of Phoenix palms on the northeast side didn't look like ordinary palms. But beside it, a few

inches from a small fern, he saw a single coral rock, a chunk no larger than a man's fist. It was the only rock in the entire yard.

Agent St. Pierre already had a shovel. The blade of the shovel, six to eight inches under the surface, smashed a bottle. A note, folded longways once, and tightly rolled, was inside. Delicately, St. Pierre picked it up. It was clean except for a few fragments of glass and fresh flecks of dirt. He returned to the game room.

Carefully, he unrolled the paper. There were three sheets, eight and a half by eleven inches. With O'Dowd and Vensel peering over his shoulders, St. Pierre spread the sheets on the round table in the game room and began to read.

Robert Mackle:

Sir, your daughter has been kidnapped by us and we now hold her for ransom. She is quite safe, if somewhat uncomfortable. We offer no proof of our possession of her at this time. It will arrive by mail in a few days. Barbara is presently alive in a small capsule buried in a remote piece of soil. She has enough food and water and air to last seven days. At the end of the seven days the life-supporting batteries will be discharged and her air supply will be cut off. The box is waterproof and very strong—fibreglass reinforced plywood—she has little chance of escaping. The box is in an unusual and lonely place. She has no chance of being accidentally stumbled upon.

Contemplate, if you will, the position into which this puts you. If you pay the ransom prior to the seven days, we will tell you of her whereabouts. Should you catch the messenger we send to pick up the ransom, we will simply not say anything to anyone and ergo Barbara will suffocate. The messenger knows only one of us and he will report to us via radio from the pick-up site. We will immediately know his fate.

Should you catch all of us, we will never admit anything, as to do so would be suicide *and* again—she will die. As you can see, you don't *want* to catch us for to do so would be condemning your lovely and intelligent daughter to death. The police may allow you to have a free hand prior to the return of your daughter should you be so callous as to contact them. If you ask the police to advise you in this matter please be aware that their very presence will scare us off. We can see no way for you to secure the safe return of your daughter other than to obey our instructions explicitly.

1. Although we will always anticipate the involvement of the police in this situation, be assured that if your communication with them or their actual presence is detected, we will break off negotiations with you immediately. We have tied into several of the possible means of

communications that you have with the police and we feel that you will be unable to contact them without our knowledge

2. The ransom will be \$500,000 in recently-issued \$20 bills. Here are the requirements you must meet in this matter.

The notes must not be older than 1950 issue.

No more than ten notes may have consecutive serial numbers, i.e., the notes must have a great variety of serial numbers and not be merely shuffled

The notes must be Federal Reserve notes of standard configuration. No more than one half of the notes may be uncirculated

No form of marking on the bills is acceptable. Please note that the bills will undergo a minimum of eight hours of intense examination before we allow you to have knowledge of the subject's whereabouts. We have planned a series of forty-four tests on a large representative sample of the bills. These tests include every chemical and physical test of any remote applicability. No omission, shaving, spotting, cutting, counterfeiting, irradiating will go undetected.

3. The bills should occupy no more than 4000 cubic inches and thusly fit into a standard large suitcase of inside dimension 31.5" long x 18 7/8" high x 6.25" deep. Purchase such a suitcase and lock the bills inside.

When you have the money in readiness, call all the Miami area major newspapers and place the following ad in the "personal" section of the classified advertisements:

"Loved one—please come home. We will pay all expenses and meet you anywhere at any time. Your family "

Prepare your car for a trip and on the night of the ad's first appearance we will call you at your home after midnight to advise you of where you must go to deliver the money. You must be the one to deliver the money, Robert. You will dress yourself in an all-white outfit. You must use the Lincoln to deliver the money.

In order to prevent the instructional call being traced it will be very brief and no portion of it will be repeated. If the phone rings more than three times or the connection takes longer than fifteen seconds we will not contact you. You will have a limited period of time to make the rendezvous so you should be ready to leave your house within one minute of receiving the phone call in order to be within the time limit. You will proceed to the area of the meeting within the legal speed limit as if you were in no hurry. We will not meet you if you fail to show within the time limit which is only a short time longer than you will require to drive to the pick-up site. Any unusual police activity or other activity in the area of the pick-up will cancel the appointment.

When you arrive at the pick-up site you will know it by a signal of three short flashes repeated continuously from a flashlight directed at the windshield of your car. When you see the signal you will stop the

car and immediately take the suitcase towards the light. The light will be mounted on top of a box. The suitcase should be placed within the box. You will then return to your car and proceed back up the street, in the direction from which you came and go home. Any deviation from this outline will result in your death. Our messenger will have you in his sights from the time you leave your car. Within twelve hours after you deliver the money you will receive another phone call advising you of your daughter's whereabouts. A letter will be sent also to ensure the finding of your daughter.

IN THEIR PRIVATE PENTHOUSE executive dining room on the eighteenth floor, the senior officers of the First National Bank of Miami began their every-Tuesday luncheon as usual at 12:15 pm.

"Mr. O'Dowd is here," said a receptionist, interrupting.

Robert Bruce, president of the bank, a precise and unemotional man of fifty-four, expected him. O'Dowd had telephoned ten to fifteen minutes before. Wordlessly, Bruce arose from the dining table and ushered O'Dowd into a smaller unused dining room.

The Mackles had dealt with First National since the 1940s. Bruce knew O'Dowd as treasurer of Deltona. He had played golf with him.

O'Dowd wasted no conversation. He wanted \$500,000 in \$20 bills as soon as possible. He showed Robert Bruce a xerox copy of the ransom note. Bruce hurried back into the executive dining room.

There was no question that the bank would loan the Mackles the money. But the crucial question was: Could the bank come up with twenty-five thousand \$20 bills in an afternoon? Could anyone? Bruce had no idea. He began to think of obtaining money from other banks in Miami.

At 12:20 the news of the kidnapping broke on the radio. Elliott Mackle put a call through to Bobby in Philadelphia immediately. He didn't want Bobby to hear of the kidnapping of his sister by radio.

"Bobby," he said. "Sit down and listen carefully." In that fraction of a second, Bobby could think of only one thing. His mother or father was dead. Someone was dead. He knew it. He felt oddly relieved when he heard it was kidnapping instead.

AT THE RODEWAY INN in Decatur, Agent Kaas told Vessels, "The news is out." Soon it was obvious. Reporters began congregating outside the motel room. Vessels and Agent Kaas went outside, and politely requested on behalf of the family that they leave. The reporters meandered down to the street end of the parking lot and waited, watched. They wouldn't leave.

At this juncture Robert Mackle knew very little of what was happening in Miami. Kaas had told him that the note had been found but a discussion of its contents would have to await the arrival of an inspector from the Washington office, who was coming to take charge of the investigation. The inspector would not be with them until later in the afternoon.

The fact is that a gentle conspiracy had evolved. Robert's brother Elliott simply did not want Robert to know the contents of the note until something positive could be done.

AROUND TWO O'CLOCK Robert Bruce telephoned the Mackle home from the bank and asked for Bill O'Dowd. "Bill," said Bruce, "that package you asked for is available." The head teller had told him they would be able to provide the \$500,000 in \$20 bills without recourse to other banks. It was a good day for cash in hand.

Bruce also said he would send a messenger over. "So, if you don't mind, we'll get this note signed this afternoon."

No bank, as Bruce well knew, could lend money without a corresponding entry on the books, regardless of circumstances. The ransom money would be considered a commercial loan at the then prime rate of six and a half per cent.

The bank's three top working executives then mulled over the problem of recording the serial numbers of the dollar bills so that some day the groundwork would be there for prosecution. The bank had access to seven different computers, but the computers were already programmed for the night's work. The alternative was for the money to be microfilmed by a high-speed Recordak machine, used for photographing cheques. Technically, the photographing of US currency could be a felony, but one of several FBI agents who had turned up at the bank telephoned the Miami office of the Secret Service to explain the situation.

Meanwhile, Sumpasis, the head teller, had other things to worry about. Physically, he had to collect the money. Also he was told that none of the twenty-five thousand \$20 bills could be older than 1950. That made it necessary for someone to pull out all bills of the 1934 series. Someone had to start screening, and one person, obviously, wasn't going to be enough.

Sumpasis and three others began thumbing packet after packet. They kept to themselves in the bank's money room. The other one thousand and twelve bank employees knew nothing of their task. The screening took approximately three hours.

Later in the afternoon Sumpasis had the money taken to the Recordak microfilm machine. The machine wasn't exactly colour-blind, but on that day it wasn't reproducing the green too clearly. Green ink is used on the front side of every \$20 bill for serial numbers. They could be read but not easily.

It was about four thirty or five o'clock when it dawned on them that they were going to have to take down the serial numbers manually. Looking ahead to possible prosecution, it appeared to be the most logical approach: One man copy a serial number and another man verify the number. Both could testify. But how many people did they need for the operation? How long would it take? No one had the answer. Obviously, it had to be done immediately.

There were five floors of assorted bank officers and some had already left for the day. Bruce had all departments notified and at about 5:30 eighty-five officers, all those found in the building, began congregating in the boardroom. Only a few of them had ever counted money professionally.

An FBI agent brought over a stack of forms for recording serial numbers. For each bill to be copied there was a space for the series year, then separate blanks for each letter and number. Most bills had ten digits.

Teams scattered out from the boardroom throughout the third floor, confiscating desks and counter space, loosening ties and rolling up sleeves. They began their long labour.

Frank Mackle, meanwhile, talked to Bruce by telephone. Could the bank get a suitcase?

That was no problem, Bruce thought. He knew exactly whom to call. On the bank's board of directors were two men who ran the two biggest department stores in town. Bruce reread the xeroxed instructions. "The bills should occupy no more than 4000 cubic inches and thusly fit into a standard large suitcase of inside dimensions 31.5" long \times 18.75" high \times 6.25" deep...."

The luggage was not standard. The stores had suitcases that long and other suitcases that high and deep but the cubic content wasn't right. Even a luggage wholesaler couldn't find a piece of those dimensions.

In Bruce's private office, Carl Bruns, the vice-chairman, suddenly had an idea. "I bet my wife has a suitcase about that size." He telephoned her. His wife obediently dragged out from the floor of a linen closet her blue suitcase and measured it with a tape measure. It was almost perfect.

AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE FBI, arrangements had already been made for the telephones at the Mackle home to be tapped. Recording equipment was also installed, as it was for the Mackle telephones at the Rodeway Inn.

At the Rodeway Inn, Vessels would wait for the telephone to ring twice, then pick it up before the third ring. By the third ring, Agent Kaas would have on earphones in the next room. To nearly all callers, Vessels would say politely and firmly, "We will be in touch, please keep this line open. Don't call again."

On the Emory University campus that afternoon, an FBI agent scrutinized Barbara's administrative records. They reflected nothing that seemed pertinent to the crime of kidnapping. Other agents sought leads among Barbara's friends and classmates who had not left for the holidays, but without success.

Then Assistant Professor Marshall Casse, one of Barbara's tutors at Emory, telephoned the dean's office. He had heard of the kidnapping on the two o'clock news. He felt a little ridiculous, but, just possibly, he might be of some help. He had overheard a conversation the previous Saturday afternoon, someone asking about Barbara Mackle. It probably had no relation at all with the kidnapping, but just in case the FBI or anyone wanted to talk to him, he would leave a telephone number where he could be reached that evening.

Meanwhile, Rex Shroder, the FBI inspector from Washington, arrived at the Rodeway Inn to take over the investigation. A stern man with a quick intelligence and a slight drawl, strong physically, with rimless glasses perched on a freckled face, he looked directly at Jane and Robert Mackle and said immediately, "I want you to know that the director, Mr. Hoover, sent me down personally. He sends his sympathy and he wants you to know that the entire weight of his organization is behind this investigation. I assure you that it is going to have a happy ending."

"He was the first person to say what I wanted to hear," said Jane Mackle later. "He was so convincing, so sure. He really eased my mind."

"I can't find out anything about the note," Robert said.

"I have it with me," Shroder replied. They went into the next room. Robert read the note in silence until he finished.

"I guess you are waiting for some kind of reaction?"

Shroder nodded.

"Well, my reaction in reading it is terror, but on the other hand, I

feel a lot better. I think we are dealing with a highly intelligent person and not a maniac who will chop somebody up."

Shroder broke into a grin. "We feel exactly the same way."

Robert went back to his wife in the next room. "Jane," he said, "they want half a million dollars and they will return Barbara to us safely. It is a highly intelligent note and I feel better about it." He did not tell his wife their daughter was buried alive.

Billy Vessels had read the note a few minutes earlier, out of Robert's presence. One paragraph had struck Vessels forcefully. "... You must use the Lincoln to deliver the money." Use the Lincoln? Robert had owned the Lincoln only six weeks. Before, he had driven a Chrysler for two years. How much did the kidnapper know about the family? Where could he have learned that?

Bobby Mackle arrived a few minutes after Inspector Shroder. He walked directly to the motel room and grabbed his father by both shoulders.

"Dad," he said, "we're going to get Barbara back."

"I knew he had been schooling himself to say that all the way down from Philadelphia," said his father much later.

Not once in the ordeal would Bobby break emotionally where anyone could see him. Outwardly, he would remain confident.

The kidnapper had written, "Prepare your car for a trip and on the night of the ad's first appearance we will call you at your home to advise you of where you must go to deliver the money." Robert wanted to know if the ad couldn't be put in right away.

"Well, not until we actually have the money," said Shroder.

Robert packed for his wife. She was hardly in condition to do it herself. Vessels called the airline.

The Mackles left the Rodeway Inn shortly after seven o'clock that Tuesday evening. An agent diverted newsmen momentarily by the simple act of standing outside the door for questioning. "We are getting them away from the motel," he said. "They just need a little peace and quiet."

Only two newsmen from WSBT-TV had pursued the Mackle car, and they gave up when the car, driven by Agent Kaas, went through a "no admittance" gate at the airport and an airport police car shone a spotlight on the news car.

Frank Mackle and Dr. Lauth, a physician and personal friend, met the airliner at Miami International Airport at 9:45 pm. Frank walked straight to his brother and put his arms around him.

"Do we have the money?" Robert asked.

“Yes. The bank has already called,” said Frank. “They’re getting it together now. The ad will be in tomorrow’s papers.”

The ride home was hurried. Jane Mackle was surprised to see the lights on and the curtains pulled. She hadn’t pulled the front-room draperies in years.

A stranger, Agent St. Pierre, opened the front door for them. Elliott was there too, waiting in the den near the telephone. O’Dowd had gone home.

At the First National Bank of Miami, the eighty-five officers still worked in almost absolute silence, broken by the snap of rubber bands. Near eleven o’clock it became apparent the listing was about finished. The bank officers were beginning to leave. In less than six hours, they had copied in pen and pencil and verified in excess of six million digits on two hundred and ninety-six pages.

FBI agents from the crime laboratory in Washington had arrived in Miami and they were waiting to take Mrs. Bruns’s suitcase and photograph it for identification purposes—if the money would fit. Bruns was down on his hands and knees, personally packing the suitcase. He marvelled at how well it fitted.

Then the money was removed and put again into two sacks and returned to the first floor. An FBI agent took the suitcase. He would have it back the first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER FOUR

I’m being left here to die. This is it, I thought. The thought entered my mind, why wait? Instead of waiting a week, why not just turn off the fan. I would get warm and drowsy and sleepy and it would be so easy.

Then I said to myself, Come on, Barbara, you know better than that. You’ll make it. I tried to make myself cry then. I said, well, I’ll cry. I’ll feel better. But I don’t know why, I just couldn’t.

I rarely actually cry. I never show my feelings in front of other people. Except when I broke down on the telephone to my parents about the flu, I can hardly remember when I cried last. It might have been while watching the funeral of President Kennedy but nobody else was in the room. I am usually very quiet. I don’t talk about emotions. Crying for someone else is different from crying for yourself. I don’t like to cry for myself. I guess the last time I cried was when Sandy, our collie, died. He was my dog and followed me

everywhere I went. He was part of the family and when he died I went up in my room and cried.

As I lay there, trying to cry, I began to think about the kidnappers. I kept thinking of him, not her. Look, I said, if he was going to let me die, he wouldn't have gone to all this trouble. If he wanted me to die, he would have just killed me, right? OK, maybe he won't come back. But he'll tell somebody. And somebody will come and get me out. It went back and forth in my mind.

But what happens to me if something happens to him? How will anyone know I'm here? There are just the two of them. Or was he telling the truth about other people? Do other people know exactly where I am? What if they are killed? The way he was driving that certainly was possible. So many things could happen. It really frightened me that they might get killed on the road.

Then I thought, that's ridiculous. There are other people. He is not in it by himself. He talked about Jake and the boys. Jake? Jake knows where I am. Good old Jake. I tried to laugh but I couldn't. There must be a Jake.

I tried again to make myself laugh. Whenever I sing I always laugh. My voice is so terrible. I can't sing at all. So I started to sing, Jingle Bells, Jingle Bells, Jingle all the way.

And then it happened. You know how a bulb flickers just before it burns out? That's what it did. It flickered and it went out.

I said, "No!"

This was the worst possible thing that could have happened. I couldn't see my hand. I couldn't see anything. I sort of cried aloud, "Oh, God. You can't do this to me." I wasn't hysterical. I didn't pound at that point. I knew that was futile. But this was almost as bad as when they first left me.

It was black. I didn't realize how much the light meant. Even though I had managed to keep it off, I knew it was there, and every time I really had become afraid, I had turned it on. I would say, OK, OK, everything is all right. It was so reassuring.

Then in the darkness I remembered the tranquillizers. And I was so mad at myself. Where were they? Why didn't I find them before? Why was I so stupid?

I had never had a tranquillizer in my life before but I guessed they must be little capsules in a bottle. I remembered there was a paper bag and I felt for it and found it. Inside were apples. There was some bread there, and some chewing gum. I didn't open the gum. I was still feeling for the tranquillizers. I felt a piece of candy and

unwrapped it and I tasted it. It was a caramel. I wasn't hungry at all. I kept feeling around for the tranquillizers and I couldn't find them.

Well, this is just something else that he lied about. He could have put them down at the bottom of the box. I remember trying to get down to the bottom, reaching and stretching and straining. I finally decided that if they were at the bottom, I could never get to them. I was still mad at myself for not looking before the light went out. With my feet I could feel a blanket down there. It was real wet. I could tell that right through Bobby's socks. I couldn't stretch my feet out all the way and I was getting very uncomfortable. I'm five feet eight and three quarter inches tall and I knew there just wasn't enough room. There was a thin plastic mat underneath me and I kept switching from one side to the other trying to get comfortable. I could feel my hips getting sore. I didn't know it then but they were turning black and blue.

I hadn't had anything to drink yet. I was very thirsty. When the girl, Ruthie, had climbed in and crawled all over me, she had pulled up this thin long black tube. It was rubber and it was real small. I had to suck real hard. It took for ever for the water to come up the tube and when it finally came it tasted terrible. It tasted so bad I didn't drink very much.

I became more conscious of the flu. I couldn't breathe through my nose. It wasn't runny. I didn't sneeze or cough. I didn't have to blow my nose. It was just stopped up and I had to breathe through my mouth. It made me extremely nervous. You know how when you lie on one side during the night and one side of your nose will drain to the other and one nostril will then be clear? Well, that never happened to me.

I began to think about mental torture. My brother had told this story about this man who was in a prison camp of some kind and he could undergo mental torture. Whenever they were trying to interrogate this man and break him down in any way, he would slowly build a house in his mind, you know, brick by brick. He took himself completely away from the people who were torturing him.

I didn't think about building a house with bricks. I thought about decorating our Christmas tree. I know this sounds funny, but I decorated our Christmas tree in my mind three or four times. The bulbs and ornaments have been around for years and I thought of each one specifically. I made some of them. On three of them I

sprinkled sparkle in names, Daddy, Mommy, and Bobby. This was when I was ten or eleven years old.

I love to decorate. All the Christmas decorations are in boxes on a shelf out in the garage and in my mind I would have Dad go out and get them. He would have to get the ladder and I could see him going up each step. He would take the boxes down, one by one, and I would open them, and look at each ornament. They are breakable, and very carefully, I would decorate the tree. Daddy always put the lights on himself. He wouldn't let anyone touch the lights. That was his job. I put the top on, a pointed ornament with a little bulb in it. Then I would put on the tinsel. The tree was always in the game room. In the living room I would put the lights on the mirror and fix the little china reindeer and the little china Santa Claus on a sleigh. I always do that. . . .

It must have been a day and I had to go to the bathroom. I've got very good kidneys for a girl but I had to go very badly. No bowel movement. That didn't happen. I didn't have much to eat in the days before because of the flu and I wasn't hungry at all when I was buried. You can imagine how awkward everything was. At my feet there was this plastic pail. It was bell-shaped and it had a top to it, a lid sort of, curved slightly, and I had to put that down underneath me. Everything was so difficult in that compressed space, and I was as careful as I could be. Some of it poured on the outside of the pail. Even though I had to go some more, I didn't. If he had just left a cup or something, really.

I kept thinking about the ransom payoff. I didn't think much about the money at all. I had Dad calling the bank; no particular bank, just a bank, and they put the money in a cardboard box and wrapped it up. I thought of it as a small box. I didn't think much about the amount of money. Maybe \$5000. Honestly. I don't think of ourselves as having money in the family. Nobody really does. I don't think my friends think of us as having money. I hope not. Daddy is always kidding me about being an expensive daughter. It is a family joke. Mother is very reasonable about money. When I ask Daddy, can we have a boat? he says, nope. Anyway, Daddy had the cardboard box and in my mind I put him driving out to the Rodeway, stopping at the red lights. I've driven it so many times. You go down Moreland and on Moreland you catch the turnpike. I went minute by minute, second by second, giving them plenty of time, so that when it was time for them to come and dig me up I would know it and I could be ready.

LATE THE TUESDAY EVENING of December 17, Assistant Professor Marshall Casse, who had left his number with the dean's office, received a telephone call from an FBI agent. What could Professor Casse tell him about someone asking for Barbara Mackle at the Emory campus? It could be important.

On Saturday morning, December 14, three days before the kidnapping, Professor Casse had begun grading final exams in his office on the Emory campus. He had taken a break about two fifteen in the afternoon and while walking on the first floor near the main office he overheard a man say, "There is someone in the office," emphasizing the word is. A girl was with him

Professor Casse saw a man approaching, fairly heavy, he thought, perhaps two hundred and forty pounds, with a full dark and striking beard. He was dressed for the street, better than she, dark pants and what the professor described as a gold cardigan sweater, buttoned down the front. The man was six or six one; the girl was only five feet one or so, quite petite. She was dressed rough. Sweatshirt, blue jeans, tennis shoes, and her hair was very short.

"Do you have a list of students in this school?" the man asked.

"Yes, there is such a list, but I don't have one," said Professor Casse. "I suggest you come back on Monday morning when the office is open."

"Does school continue until Wednesday?" the man asked.

"No, classes were over as of last Wednesday, exams continue until next Wednesday," the professor replied.

"Then we can't find her in class," the man said to the girl.

"Is there someone particularly you are looking for?"

At this point the bearded man mentioned the name of a person.

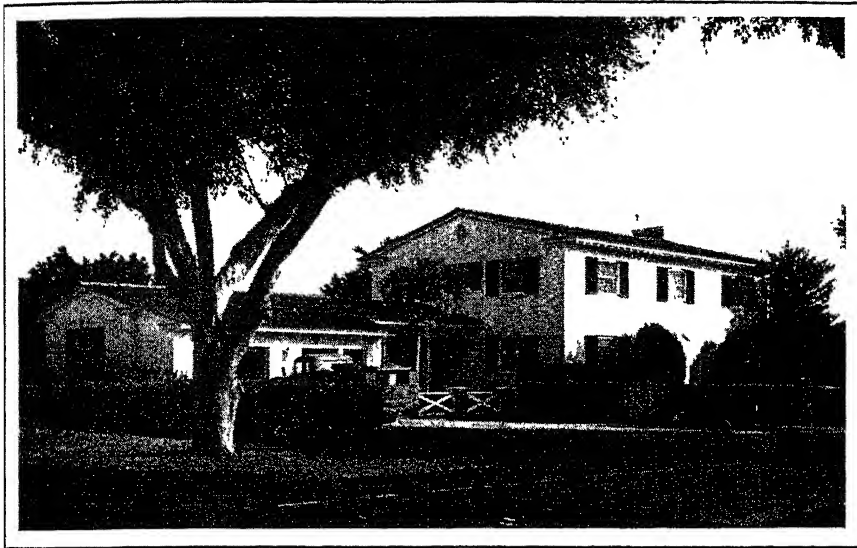
Professor Casse thought he said, "Ruth Scherer."

"Ruth Scherer is my secretary," Professor Casse said. "She is the secretary for the department."

"Well, then that ought to make her easy to find," the man responded quickly and easily.

As the couple left, the professor followed them to the door and watched. The entire encounter puzzled him slightly. Why should they ask for a list of students, then say they were looking for Ruth Scherer?

About four o'clock the same afternoon Professor Casse was walking down the stairs towards the drinking fountain. On the ground floor, in an alcove underneath the stairway, there were three public telephones attached to the wall.



This is Coral Gables, the Florida home of the Robert Mackle family at 4111 San Amaro Drive. The kidnappers had buried a ransom note under a rock near a palm tree on the property.

Professor Casse, almost directly above, stopped and listened. The same man was on the telephone. He seemed annoyed.

"I am looking for Barbara Mackle. It is an emergency," and he lowered his voice. Then Professor Casse heard the man hang up.

Deliberately, Professor Casse descended the stairs. He looked closely at the couple again. They didn't seem to notice him. He heard the man say simply, "She is at the Rodeway Inn."

And the girl, seemingly surprised, replied, "What is she doing there?" They left hurriedly.

On Monday Professor Casse was back in his office grading papers about 10:30 am. From his third-floor window he again saw the man and the girl. Mrs. Scherer was in the office. He called to her and he pushed up the window. Together they looked out over the parking lot and saw them get into a blue foreign station wagon. Mrs. Scherer said that she did not recognize them. Obviously they weren't trying very hard to find her in her office. That was the last he had seen of them.

The FBI man on the telephone wanted to know if Professor Casse had written down the licence number.

No, he hadn't. But he was positive it was a Massachusetts plate. He was positive the car was blue and he was positive it was a station wagon. He thought it was a Volkswagen.

The FBI man thanked him and wanted to know where he could find him the next day if necessary. Professor Casse said he would be at the library.

The lead looked good. Certainly it had to be pursued. Could computers isolate all the blue Volkswagen station wagons, registered in Massachusetts? How many would there be?

The beard and the girl opened other possibilities. Were they looking for a man who had just shaved a beard? Could Mrs. Mackle have mistaken a ski-masked girl for a twelve-year-old boy?

Behind the closed curtains of the Mackle home the three brothers that night tried to think of anyone who might dislike them enough to kidnap Barbara. In the twenty-three years since the end of World War II the Mackles had built in excess of thirty thousand homes. Was it conceivable that a homeowner was so deranged he would kidnap Robert's daughter?

In the game room no one slept, not the FBI agents, Vessels, Bobby, nor the brothers. The night lingered, and the clock on the wall over the telephone in the den ticked so loudly it could be heard across the room. No one said anything. Finally, about 5:30 am the sound of a one-hundred-and-twenty-page newspaper striking the concrete porch outside broke the stillness.

Billy Vessels sprang to his feet, and flung open the front door. The Miami *Herald* of Wednesday, December 18, 1968 lay wrapped in a polyethylene sleeve, and deep in its fourth section, after the paid death notices and the cemetery lots for sale, at the very top of the second column from the right on page 20-D he found what he was looking for:

LOVED ONE—please come home. We will pay all expenses and meet you anywhere at any time. Your family.

The classified ad, inserted when the presses stopped after the first edition, appeared in 352,620 papers that morning.

Vessels was startled to see newspaper and television reporters congregating across the street. He was kept busy, taking telephone calls and getting rid of people. He would say the same thing repeatedly. "If you have something to contribute, please help. Otherwise, please get off the line and don't call again."

Hardly anyone felt hungry. Dr. Lauth insisted that Robert Mackle

have breakfast whether he wanted it or not. He had returned to the Mackle residence early that morning. "You've got to maintain your strength on this thing, Bob," said Dr. Lauth. "You've got to keep your equilibrium."

Inspector Rex Shroder arrived somewhat later. He said that he would like to borrow Robert's Lincoln for a while. He wanted installed a hidden microphone for transmitting. Billy Vessels could drive the Lincoln to a Texaco station directly across the street from the Deltona executive offices and leave it there to be gassed and prepared as if for a long trip in compliance with the ransom instructions. It was all arranged.

Vessels delivered the car. He and Agent Frank Smith then drove in Smith's car to the First National Bank in downtown Miami. At the bank a guard had saved a parking space for them in an adjacent parking garage accessible to the third floor where Bruce, the bank president, waited for them in his office. Sumpasis, the head teller, accompanied by guards, carried the money in sacks to Bruce's private office. A guard carried the empty suitcase. Vessels watched as the bankers repacked it. Then he lifted it. The suitcase now weighed seventy-five pounds. From Bruce he took the key and a piece of paper dated December 18, 1968.

It said: "RECEIVED OF THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK OF MIAMI \$500,000." Vessels signed first Elliott Mackle's name, then "by" and his own name. Bruce signed too.

As two FBI agents walked in front of him and two guards behind, Vessels carried the suitcase down to the car. A second FBI car, riding shotgun, followed Vessels and Agent Smith to the Mackle home. Unobtrusively Vessels took the suitcase inside and set it down in the den beside the fireplace.

The ad was in the paper. The money was ready. Soon the Lincoln would be ready. They would simply have to wait for the telephone.

"We will call you at your home after midnight to advise you where you must go to deliver the money," the instructions had stated. It was a few minutes before twelve noon. How long would they wait?

CHAPTER FIVE

At the Catholic rectory of the Church of the Little Flower on a broad and palm-lined avenue named Anastasia, the Reverend John Mulcahy had a few minutes to kill before lunch. He was in his room

reading when the buzzer buzzed on the extension telephone beside his bed. Someone had asked for a priest and Mrs. Irene Kappes, the secretary downstairs, had referred the call to him

"Hello. Father Mulcahy speaking."

"Is this a priest? Are you a Catholic priest?"

"Well, I suppose I am. Yes, I am," said Father Mulcahy, amused, wondering to himself just how good a priest he was. He was a young man, black-haired, small of stature, and he spoke softly with the lyrical brogue of Ireland. He had lived in America a little more than six years.

"Father, promise me that you will not tell anyone what I am going to tell you except the person I designate. Father, this is a matter of life and death."

It was a hard and precise male voice. Father Mulcahy wondered just what sort of kook he had on the other end of the line.

"You promise me this now, Father? It is a matter of life and death," he repeated.

"Well, I suppose so. Yes."

"I am the kidnapper of Barbara Mackle."

Father Mulcahy didn't believe him. Someone was always putting a priest in a position where the priest had to do something. He said nothing. He listened. He let the man talk.

Later Father Mulcahy would recall the conversation. "He told me that the last time his people checked on Barbara she was OK. He said she was up in Georgia, outside Atlanta, and that she was buried in a coffin, fifteen or twenty inches under the ground. She was being well taken care of, but she was a bit sick and she didn't have many clothes."

To Father Mulcahy, the caller appeared mentally unbalanced. What he was saying seemed preposterous.

"What am I supposed to do?" Father Mulcahy asked at the time. It was probably a hoax, he thought.

"He told me he wanted me to go to the Mackle home and tell Mr Mackle that he had called and that their daughter was alive. To speak to the father and no one else. He said the whole place was full of cops, detectives and FBI men; that he had checked there. Tell the father, no one else, that his lovely daughter will die unless he followed the instructions. He said lovely daughter."

The man gave him the Mackle address, 4111 San Amaro Drive, Coral Gables. "You will probably hear from me again."

"Goodbye," said Father Mulcahy, his mind diverted totally.

What if it wasn't a hoax? The magnitude of the possibilities frightened him. Without a word to anyone, he walked down the stairs and out the front door and climbed into his green Ford Mustang.

IN THE MASTER BEDROOM of the Mackle home, Jane Mackle insisted she see the news on television that noon. Her sister-in-law, Anne Braznell, who stopped by briefly, couldn't prevent her.

"And when they showed Barbara's picture," said Anne Braznell, "Jane put her head in her hands and cried, 'Oh, God. Where is she?' It was pathetic."

Downstairs some aspects of the Mackle household continued normally. Ann Briggie, Jane's sister, had to empty the garbage. Photographers lolling on a lawn across the street leaped to their feet. Jane happened to be watching from the bedroom window. "Oh, Ann," she said, "you just had your picture taken emptying the garbage." It was one of the few times they laughed.

The doorbell rang through the Mackle household, and the FBI agent who had watched the priest park his car, walk up the walkway, and press the doorbell, opened the front door.

"I would like to speak to Mr. Mackle," Father Mulcahy said.

Robert came to the foyer and he could see the priest outside. "Please," he said to the FBI agent, "I don't want to see anyone. Tell the Father some other time."

The FBI agent again opened the door. "What do you want, Father? Unless you can make a contribution..."

"I would like to speak to Mr. Mackle. I have a message for him about Barbara."

The door swung open and as Father Mulcahy walked into the darkened foyer, Robert Mackle stepped forward. Accompanied by the FBI agents, they went into the formal living room, a green-carpeted room in the front of the house where bookcases flanked an immaculate marble fireplace. Never in his life had Father Mulcahy had such a rapt audience.

"Now just start at the beginning, Father," said Inspector Shroder evenly.

Father Mulcahy repeated everything he could remember. Two agents began to take notes as he spoke. Then, afterwards, Inspector Shroder questioned him closely to make him amplify and clarify. He explained that he would like permission to install a telephone tap at the church. That would be no problem.

As the priest reached his car, newsmen surrounded him. Generally, they assumed he was there to comfort the family. "Have they heard from the kidnappers?" someone asked.

"They have reason to believe their daughter is alive and unharmed," Father Mulcahy said. He did not elaborate.

The afternoon dragged. There was very little to do but wait. Dr. Lauth had virtually abandoned his practice to become physician-in-residence at the Mackle home. He realized that the tensions would intensify during the evening. Somehow he had to persuade Robert to rest while he could.

"Now, Bob," he said, "we think we'll need you tonight. You are terribly tense and I understand that. There is not much I can do, but I can fix you a bourbon and then give you a pill that will let you sleep for just about three hours."

Robert followed the doctor's orders. He slept. When he awoke, he looked at his watch. It was exactly a quarter to four.

Before sunset, Billy Vessels and an agent left to pick up the Lincoln. The FBI had installed the hidden radio-transmitting unit in the car. A microphone was concealed in the driver's air-conditioning vent. The regular antenna served as the aerial. Any conversation in the car could be monitored at FBI headquarters and at the Mackle residence.

FBI agents set up telephone-monitoring equipment on a card table in the den near the telephone. The second the phone would ring, an agent would put on the earphones. "My instructions were to let it ring twice, then pick it up on the third ring," said Robert. "The agent would be listening before I answered. We kept going over my instructions. One of the things I was told to do, no matter who called, no matter what, was to keep the party on the line as long as I could. The longer I held him the better chance they had of tracing him."

Special equipment to make tracing easier had been installed at central telephone offices all over Dade County.

So night came—eight o'clock, nine o'clock—and Robert Mackle changed into his white clothing. The sight of him pacing nervously in the game room, garbed in hideous white, struck Dr. Lauth as terrifying, and he turned away and said nothing.

At the Church of the Little Flower, Father Mulcahy sat before a television in the lobby of the rectory with two other priests, tense and alert in expectation of a second telephone call. Very few of the one hundred and fifty agents assigned to the Miami FBI office slept the

night of December 18–19. They were assigned patrol districts and in unmarked radio cars they were scattered throughout the Miami area. If Robert Mackle had to leave the house after the kidnapper called, the FBI wanted to keep the Lincoln under discreet surveillance. All agents received very explicit instructions. Do not interfere. Allow the kidnappers to pick up the suitcase and allow them to leave unhindered.

In the Mackle residence, Inspector Shroder and Billy Vessels read over again for perhaps the thirtieth time the instructions: “. . . we will call you at your home after midnight to advise you of where you must go to deliver the money . . .” and everyone was keyed to the hour of twelve. The call would come at midnight. “It became sort of a witching hour,” said Vessels.

At 11:30 pm the congregation in the Mackle den and game room comprised the three Mackle brothers, Bobby, Billy Vessels and Dr. Lauth, and six FBI agents, a dozen men in all. Jane Mackle lay in a Demerol-and-Sparine-induced sleep, fully clothed on her bed upstairs, a blanket carefully tucked around her shoulders.

The black minute hand crept up across the hour hand. It was midnight. The telephone remained silent and unused.

“Billy,” said Robert quietly. “I know they’ve killed her.”

The minutes lengthened. Frank reread the ransom note, scrutinizing it again “. . . we will call you at your home after midnight to advise you . . .”

“*After!*” he repeated. “They didn’t say how long after. After could mean one o’clock, two, three, anytime.”

Suddenly, the telephone rang. Inspector Shroder slipped on the headset earphones. Robert let it ring once, twice, and as it started to ring a third time, he picked it up.

It was a long-distance operator with a collect call from Hot Springs, Arkansas. Would he accept the charges?

“I know where your daughter is,” a man began.

Robert began to tell the man of his desperation, his willingness to do anything to get his daughter back.

“I don’t want your money,” the man said, and his voice had a put-on quality about it. “I don’t want your money,” and he rambled on somewhat incoherently.

The inspector wrote a single word on a prompt card, “Dope”. Shroder suspected the caller might be a drug addict.

The conversation ended inconclusively. The party hung up. As instructed, Robert left open the receiver momentarily. It seemed

unlikely that the caller was the true kidnapper. The manner differed radically from the previous calls to the home and to the priest. Yet who knew for certain? The FBI went to work immediately to find him and put him under surveillance.

He turned out to be a man in his twenties named Henry Lee Ward. All that night three agents kept him under surveillance. About nine o'clock the next morning, convinced he was in no way connected to the actual kidnappers, they took him into custody.

In the Mackle home conversation surfaced in eddies, calmed, died, as the hours crept, and the twelve men waited impatiently. At 3:47 am the telephone rang.

Inspector Shroder quickly slipped on the headset again. On the third ring, Robert picked it up.

"Robert Mackle?"

Robert knew instantly he was talking to the kidnapper. "Yes," he said.

"You will proceed down Bird Road to Twenty-seventh Avenue. Take a right on Twenty-seventh Avenue."

"Just a minute. How do I know who I'm talking to?"

"You know it," spat the kidnapper. "Now ..."

"How do I know Barbara is well?"

"You don't, but you'll have to take the chance. Now ..."

"Twenty-seventh Avenue?" Robert asked.

"And you'll go to Fair Isle Street. You know where it is? It's on the right off Bay Road."

"Right off Bay?"

"And you go the ... as far as you can up Fair Isle Street to the right towards the bay, and you'll come to a wall. If you look down the causeway, the bridge, over the wall, you'll see a blinking white light. You'll put the money in the box, which will have a light on it, gently, and close the lid, and you'll turn around and leave. Is that clear?"

"Yes," said Robert nervously. It wasn't clear at all. Bay Road? Did the kidnapper mean South Bayshore Drive? "Is Barbara all right?"

"She certainly is."

"And I go down which way on Twenty-seventh Avenue? South, or ..."

"You take a right."

"A right on Twenty-seventh," Robert said. "OK."

Again, it wasn't clear at all. "And down Fair Isle?" Robert asked.

"That's right, OK."

"Till I run into a dead-end street. I'm trying not to . . . I'm trying to get it . . . to a dead-end street."

"You've got it now, that's right. You'll run into a wall at the end of a bridge."

"All right, fine. I'll do everything you say."

The caller rang off. His instructions were not good. They could be understood only if studied carefully with a map. They were easily misinterpreted.

For a frantic and hectic moment, Robert Mackle tried to study the map. "Oh, there it is," he said, as someone pointed. He hurried towards the back door. It was just that fast. He picked up the suitcase and carried it out into the garage. He put it on the back seat.

Alone in the Lincoln, the concealed microphone picking up his voice, Robert kept reporting his location. In his rear-view mirror, he saw headlights five or six blocks behind him. He reported that too.

He need not have. Two agents were in a Cadillac not far behind him.

Although only ten minutes from downtown Miami, Fair Isle had stubbornly defied development for more than forty years. It was born from a sandspit in the early 1920s when its owner wanted to turn its twenty acres into a plush housing development. Two Miami financiers constructed an 800-foot two-lane concrete causeway across the bay from Miami and won zoning approval for highrise apartments, but the land, priced high, remained uninhabited.

On the Fair Isle side, the causeway ended abruptly five feet above the sandy shore, and the owners had built a forty-two-inch wall eight inches thick at the entrance so that Fair Isle Street dead-ended at the Miami end of the causeway.

Robert was already a mile too far south and he didn't know exactly where the causeway to Fair Isle was. He turned right. It was the wrong way. Already under severe pressure he drove along South Bayshore Drive, acutely aware of the passing time, streets intersected from the bayside to his right. He could read a sign for East Fairview Street and on the next block West Fairview Street. But neither led to Fair Isle. He groped in a labyrinth of blackened streets on a black night.

"I can't find this place!" he cried, his voice cracking. "Look," he said, grasping for control. "I'm going back south to South Bayshore Drive."

He turned south again and driving much slower than the posted

40-mile-an-hour speed limit, he strained to see the Fair Isle Street sign. The kidnapper's threat was reverberating through his brain. The time limit must have run out. The kidnappers would run.

"I need help," Robert cried into the concealed microphone "I can't find his place. Somebody has got to come help me."

In the Mackle home, Elliott, Frank, Bobby, Inspector Shroder and the agents, and Billy Vessels suffered almost the same feeling of desperation. They had followed him on the maps.

Suddenly, Vessels could take no more. "Let's go!" he said, and he grabbed Agent Edward Putz. Wordlessly, Elliott Mackle gave them the keys to his car, a red 1968 Cadillac, parked in the driveway close to the street. Seconds later the Cadillac screeched into motion.

Vessels and Agent Putz raced northwards along South Bayshore Drive. One street sign was missing. Vessels thought it must be Southwest Seventeenth Avenue. He and Putz had stared at that map at the house so long they knew the correct order. As they slowed again, they saw a double street sign, "Fair Isle St." "S. Bayshore La." Lane! Lane! Not Drive, not the main thoroughfare. Was this the Bay Road the kidnapper meant?

In the distance, perhaps three or four blocks away. Vessels saw headlights and recognized the Lincoln coming north. Straddling the white centre line, Vessels raced straight towards him and slammed on the brakes and stopped in the path of the Lincoln. Vessels leaped from the Cadillac, abandoning it to Agent Putz, and threw himself into the back seat of the Lincoln.

"Get going!"

"Billy, I can't find it! I've bungled it."

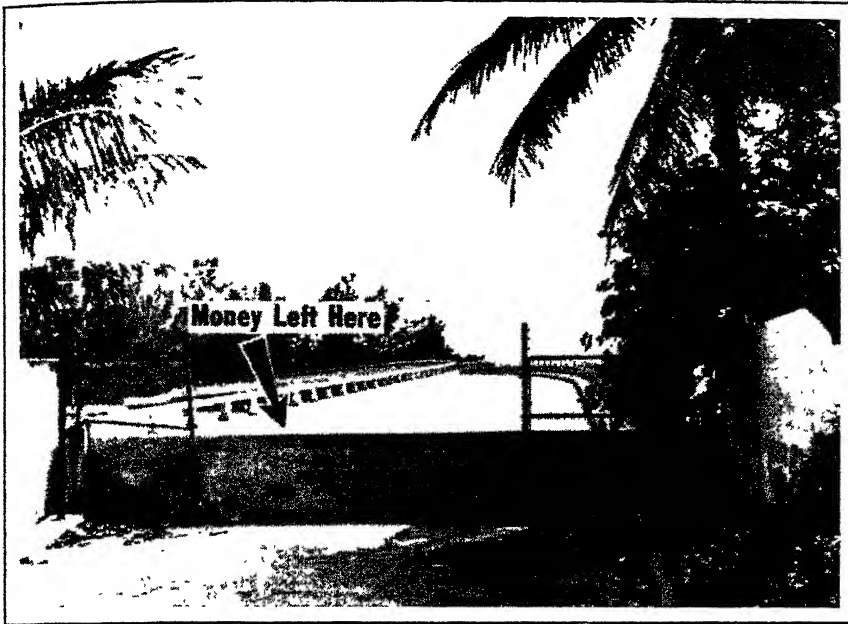
"Turn here," Vessels commanded, and they were on West Fairview Street, and then, turning right again they were on Fairhaven Place. All the damn names sounded alike.

Crouched on the back floor, Vessels could see the outline of tall palms, a three-storey apartment building. Then he saw again the double sign. "This is it! Right here!"

They arrived at where Fair Isle Street dead-ended into the low retaining wall. Even in the glare of the headlights, it was impossible to see the causeway beyond. Robert stopped the Lincoln perhaps thirty feet from the wall.

"Billy," he cried. "I've already been here."

"This is it. Take the damn thing! Just get rid of it." Vessels flung himself to the floor. Robert reached over into the back seat and grasped the handle of the suitcase.



At 3:47 am on the second night after the abduction, the kidnapper telephoned cryptic messages to Robert Mackle to leave \$500,000 on this seldom-used causeway to uninhabited Fair Isle in Biscayne Bay, Miami. Robert Mackle had great difficulty finding the causeway.

He left the front door open purposely. He wanted the inside light to be on so anyone looking could see he was by himself.

"I walked up to the wall and couldn't see any flashing lights anywhere. I lifted the suitcase and gingerly let it down as easily as I could until I felt it rest on something solid. I knew it was firm. Everything was pitch black."

His eyes adjusted. He looked for the box and he couldn't find it. For a second he stood there, then he pivoted and walked hurriedly back to the Lincoln. The time was somewhere between 4:30 and 4:35 am. The kidnapper had called nearly an hour ago.

At 4:41 am the telephone in the den rang again. Agent St. Pierre quickly put on the headset and Frank Mackle answered on the third ring.

"Hello," said Frank.

"Mackle?"

"Yes."

"You missed. How come?"

"What do you mean I missed? My brother went with the money."

"He did? Did he go to Fair Isle Street?"

"Well, that's where he ... that's where he thought he was going. But we were looking on the map and we could hardly find the turnoff and he may have missed."

"Now, let me tell you something. If he comes back without having deposited it in the right spot, tell him that it's halfway up the causeway on the right-hand side, the box, OK? And tell him there's no light on it now."

"Right," replied Frank. "Well, he's got the money and he's on his way and he just ..."

"Yeah, he's probably pretty shook up," the kidnapper cut in.

"Yeah, he's shook up, and he probably just ..." and Frank Mackle hesitated. "Well, I'm sure he's trying to find it. I ..."

"OK. Well, I haven't seen him, so I'm going back to check now ... I'm actually pretty worried about Barbara. Our last report was that she was coughing pretty badly."

"Yeah. Well, he's coming with the money and he has a clear hand, nobody's interfering or anything."

"Good. OK. Thank you very much," the kidnapper said.

"Fine," said Frank, and he heard the line go dead.

The conversation was not quite as long as Frank had hoped and the telephone technician didn't have time to trace the call.

Within five minutes of the call to Frank from the kidnapper, Robert and Vessels drove into the driveway.

They walked through to the back door, closer than the front, and Frank spoke immediately. "The kidnapper just called again. Did you leave it?"

"Yes. It was the only place I could find. Billy thinks it is the right place."

As they exchanged information, they began to feel better. Everything made sense. The kidnappers could have seen the Lincoln going up one street, then another, and realized Robert Mackle was lost. They probably had left the place to make the second call when Vessels and Robert went back. They would find it there when they looked again. The mood changed to cautious optimism. Everyone drank coffee. Inspector Shroder said Robert should go back a little before sunrise, just as soon as daylight broke. They wanted to give them plenty of time.

This time Vessels drove the Lincoln. It took approximately twelve minutes.

When they stopped at the wall, they could see plainly in the breaking daylight the steel-railed causeway. They walked hurriedly to the wall and looked over. The suitcase was gone. Vessels and Robert were elated.

A moment later, however, a car with two agents pulled up behind the Lincoln. One of the agents spoke to Robert. "There has been a shoot-out," he said. "The money has been recovered. The money is at the police station."

"Oh, my God!" cried Robert Mackle. "My God, my God. They're going to kill my daughter."

CHAPTER SIX

Paul Stanley Self was a Dade County sheriff's deputy and he enjoyed his work. At age thirty he worked nights by choice. It gave a man a chance to think. He and another deputy patrolled Key Biscayne at night in separate vehicles.

About three thirty that night Self had decided he wanted a cup of coffee. At the closest all-night restaurant, he paid the night man thirty cents for two coffees in paper cups, both with cream and sugar, and he carried them back to his car in a sack.

As he travelled south again he turned eastwards at the tollgate entrance to Rickenbacker Causeway, slow enough that he wouldn't spill the coffee. As usual, he glanced southwards towards a residential street known as Brickell Avenue extension.

Perhaps four hundred feet away he saw a parked car. "Automatically, I knew it didn't belong there. I didn't recognize it."

Deputy Self stopped and inspected the vehicle. It was a 1966 blue Volvo station wagon with a chrome-plated luggage carrier on top. No one was inside. The doors were locked. The back was filled with clothing, suitcases, a trunk. It looked as if it belonged to a commercial traveller.

It was 4:05 am and he picked up the microphone from the dash, identified himself and carefully read the Volvo's licence number. P72-098. Massachusetts, 1968. Was the car wanted? A moment later the voice of the radio dispatcher responded negatively. The Dade County Public Safety Department had no record of the vehicle. It was not wanted.

Deputy Self hesitated. It had to belong to somebody. It didn't belong there. That was for certain. It could belong to a prowler. He told the dispatcher he would wait "for a city unit" at the entrance to the Rickenbacker Causeway—and he parked so he could see the Volvo in the distance.

Within a few minutes, probably about 4:15 am, Miami Officer William Sweeney pulled up. Officer Sweeney decided he, too, would check out the Volvo. He thought it much more likely that it belonged to a pair of lovers than to a prowler.

"Aw, let's leave them alone," he said.

With their two green-and-white police cars parked under the well-lit causeway entrance, the two officers stood there in the windless and calm seventy-one-degree temperature and idled away the hour in conversation.

Shortly after five o'clock from the light of a street lamp, both officers saw a figure in the median strip perhaps five hundred feet away. He seemed to be walking towards the Volvo.

Both men hopped into their cars. With headlights on they approached, Self in the lane closest to the bay and Sweeney in the parallel lane ten yards away.

"I saw a second figure angling towards the Volvo from the median, and he started to run across Bill's lane," said Deputy Self. There was no doubt in his mind he had seen a second man, not the same man twice.

"This guy in a yellow shirt cut in front of me, running from the median, as I was coming up my side of the street," said Sweeney. "I made it there in twenty or thirty seconds and I was only twenty feet behind him."

The man fled between a hedge and the far side of a house into the blackness. Sweeney stopped within a yard or two of the corner. He grabbed the radio. "This is nine six one. I'm chasing a white male on foot. He's on Brickell running towards South Miami Avenue." He knew he would have help in a few minutes.

Deputy Self, hurrying up the other lane, saw Sweeney jump from his stopped vehicle. He looked hurriedly for the second figure. He couldn't find one. Sweeney caught a glimpse of his man climbing over a low concrete wall, jumping a hibiscus hedge at the rear of another home to his left. The man ran along the side of the house towards the front. Sweeney ran after him.

What the fleeing man apparently did not realize was that he was running straight towards a wire-link hurricane fence at the bottom of

a steep incline which led up towards a ramp entrance to a six-lane expressway.

"The fence didn't slow him much. He went right over it," said Sweeney. "But I reached the fence just as he scrambled up the ramp to the top." For a second, he had him cold.

"Stop or I'll shoot!" Sweeney yelled.

The man hesitated, paused, then pivoted slowly. Sweeney thought he was surrendering. He had no intention of shooting him. He didn't want to shoot anyone.

And then, with a terrible swiftness, Sweeney realized the man had a carbine in his right hand. He seemed to raise it as he turned. Sweeney had already lowered his own weapon. When he saw the carbine, he thought he was about to be shot.

Without aiming, Sweeney fired twice quickly and threw himself to the ground, expecting a return fire. There was none. He looked up. The man was gone. He knew he had missed. He jumped to his feet, threw his radio transmitter over the fence, quickly climbed the fence, picked up the radio, and ran up the ramp.

Deputy Self heard the shots in the blackness of a vacant lot two blocks away, and he ran out to South Miami Avenue, his gun in his hand. "Bill! Bill!" Self shouted. He could see no one.

Bill Sweeney had reached the top of the ramp and raced across six lanes of expressway, just in time to see the man climb a second fence at the bottom of a ramp on the other side and run northwards between two homes. He was getting away. He would be impossible to catch on foot, but by this time police-car sirens echoed everywhere through the morning quiet.

An arriving city officer told Deputy Self that Officer Sweeney was still radioing his location after the shooting. No one had shot him. Deputy Self hurried back to their squad car. He was glad to see them. He was certain he had seen two figures and, obviously, they had chased only one. He didn't want anyone to steal his police car.

Some of the neighbours were outside. Matter of factly, Deputy Self announced, "Everything is under control. Stay inside."

A few moments later Sweeney returned to his squad car, too. He noticed some luggage in the median strip, a suitcase and a duffel bag. The exterior of the suitcase was moist to his touch as if from the morning dew.

It was after six o'clock when Officers Self and Sweeney marched into the Miami Police Department, plopped the suitcase on the top of a glass-covered desk and opened it.

The moment Inspector Francis Lee Napin, the senior officer present, saw it, he knew. Kidnap. Atlanta. Miami. Mackle. Money. What else? He listened to their explanations. Then he went upstairs to a private office and telephoned the FBI.

I THOUGHT ABOUT DYING. I thought this is going to be my casket. I didn't think the word casket the first time, but later on I did. I said, yes, this is just about right. It could have been a little bit longer.

And when I got morbid I would think of who would find me. I wondered what I would look like and whether or not they could identify me. I was hoping that Mom and Dad wouldn't be alive when they found me. Because I wouldn't want them to think that was the way it was. Maybe they would think I was shot or something faster. Anyway, faster.

When things really got bad three or four times, I said to myself, I'm going to end it now. I don't want to wait. If I am going to die here, I want to die now.

So I turned off the fan. It would be so easy. Just go to sleep. It wouldn't be any trouble. It would start getting hot and stuffy and I would suffocate.

Then I would get a hold of myself. What if they find me in time—and I'm dead already. And Mom and Dad and everyone finds out I've turned off the battery.

Then I would say, something is going to happen. Daddy is going to pay the money. Somehow, Daddy is going to find me. In my mind, I kept building up and building up to the point where he should arrive. But I never had him actually digging me out. I kept thinking the car should be coming before long. I should be able to hear footsteps pretty soon.

But I heard nothing except that fan. Nothing.

I am sure I must have slept some but I can't remember how much. Before the kidnapping I know I had slept a lot because I was sick with the flu. I remember telling myself, I've got to sleep, I've got to sleep, and maybe I did, but I can't remember it.

Most of all it was the cold. The cold and the wetness. Every time I moved I felt wet. The dripping just almost drove me crazy. Every time I moved I had to rearrange the blanket. And every time I opened it a little bit the cold and wet would come in.

I kept thinking that I should be hungry. I should make myself eat. But I just wasn't hungry. I had three or four bites on an apple and that was enough.

I tried to determine whether it was day or night by temperature; not at the beginning, but later. I said this is Wednesday afternoon. It has to be daytime because I'm not as cold as I was. And when I felt myself getting colder later I decided it was getting to be night. It might be eleven o'clock Wednesday night.

And the time came when I started to talk to God. Religion, I believe, is very personal. Everyone has his own beliefs in what kind of a God there is. Maybe I am wrong. I don't know. I only know how I feel. If there is a God, you can talk to Him yourself. You don't need someone else between you and God. And when I was there buried alive I thought about this.

It was hard for me to pray. I don't like to recite words I never made any promises. I just started talking, as if God were there beside me. And I said, God, I'm not going to die here. I said, even if no one knows where I am, You know where I am. And I found this extremely comforting.

And after a while, the more I prayed, I said, Yes, I know there is a God. Even though I don't believe in a lot of the other things, I know there is a God. And I know He heard me.

WITHIN A FEW HOURS that Thursday morning of December 19, the FBI would know exactly who it wanted for the kidnapping of Barbara Jane Mackle. The Volvo and its contents provided a virtual treasure chest of information. It belonged to George Deacon, a former employee of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Records indicated Deacon was now employed at the University of Miami.

Inside, strewn in the back rear luggage space with three suitcases, a Scotch-plaid carrying case, a big black metal trunk tilted upwards with the word "Ruth" written in chalk, agents found a stack of sheets of typing paper, all blank. And distinct type-written indentations were on three separate sheets: "Robert Mackle: Sir, your daughter has been kidnapped . . ." The paper had been used in a typewriter at the time the original ransom note had been typed. In the Volvo agents also found a roll of Red Cross adhesive tape, a box of 30-calibre ammunition for a carbine, and one item in particular that made them stop and think. This was a 20-cc multiple-dose vial of xylocaine hydrochloride, a powerful tranquillizer, together with eleven detachable hypodermic needles, two glass plungers and syringes.

There was little doubt whose property they held. Besides clothing

for a man and a woman, agents found a chequebook with printed names, Mr. George G. and Mrs. Dorothy Deacon. The amount brought forward showed \$364.10. There was a Miami address for the Deacons: 8401 Northwest Fourteenth Avenue. It was a caravan park.

Deacon's travelling companion, however, was not his wife but rather one Ruth Eisemann-Schier. In a black glossy purse, agents found her billfold and three different passports, two from her native country, Honduras, and one from the United States.

There was her University of Miami student-identification card, her social-security card, and a bankbook showing she had withdrawn every penny nine days before: \$505.63.

In her billfold, too, was a Florida beginner's driving permit: Ruth, middle name (None), Eisemann, and a Miami address. Race: White; Eyes: Green; Height: 5'2"; Weight: 115; Date of Birth: 8 Nov 1942; Sex: F; Colour Hair: Brown, and Occupation: Student. She had taken five lessons at eight dollars each at the Blanco Driving School in Miami.

Two aeroplane tickets in the purse were for flights scheduled Friday, December 20, to leave Miami, destination: Las Vegas, Nevada. Both tickets were one way.

Agents also found flash bulbs, an unexposed film pack, a camera, and seven exposed and developed photographs. One photograph showed George Deacon, heavily bearded, beefy and fat, lying on his back on a bed, his only attire a policeman's visored cap, placed over his genitals.

A second photograph showed Ruth Eisemann standing in a provocative pose wearing only bra and panties. A third photograph had the bearded Deacon in a policeman's cap with a telephone in his hand, and a fourth was a good close-up of Deacon. Two more photographs were of Ruth, both dressed.

If there could conceivably be any doubt of their involvement in the crime, a seventh photograph made it certain. The picture was of Barbara Mackle. A sign lettered "KIDNAPPED" was under her chin. Her eyes were closed. She looked as if she was dead.

The Polaroid film pack, the FBI knew, should contain eight photographs, not seven. One was missing.

Agents began to piece together the fragmented lives of the man known as George Gary Deacon and his companion, Ruth Eisemann-Schier.

Deacon, they discovered, had gone to work for the marine lab in

the University of Miami as a research assistant nearly six months before, June 1, 1968. He had listed his age as twenty-three.

Under education he had written that he attended Cobol High School in Cobol, Alaska, from 1954 to 1958. He said he attended Northeastern University in Boston the academic year of 1967-68. Under special qualifications, he wrote: typing, cryogenics, vacuum technology, drafting, and electronic design.

"I guess I was the first to hear about him here in Miami," said Dr. Christopher Harrison, a bearded geophysicist from Oxford, England. "A friend of mine at MIT, Henry Kolm, mentioned that he had a man keen upon becoming a marine technician. He said Deacon had been on boats and had great experience."

Dr. Kolm mentioned Deacon to Dr. Caesar Emiliani, a brilliant Italian who was chairman of the division of marine geology and geophysics. "Deacon's references were excellent," said Dr. Emiliani, "but I didn't like to hire anyone sight unseen." He asked Dr. Mahlon Ball to interview him at MIT.

"He struck me as an aggressive, hard-working kid, very ambitious and physically strong," said Dr. Ball. "I talked to him about an hour. He didn't smoke or drink, he knew boats, and he looked just like what we needed. He looked good."

Dr. Emiliani concurred. Deacon went to work in June. "I was very much impressed with his drive," Dr. Emiliani recalled. "Tell him to do something—and he did it. He wouldn't come back and ask how. He learned very quickly. I liked his frankness. There was no pussy-footing around. We were very happy with him."

On a seismic-refraction cruise Dr. Ball was impressed by Deacon's carpentry. "We needed a wooden bin for seven thousand pounds of explosives and Deacon helped build it on the fantail. He just worked like the devil."

In the university office, agents found that Dr. Hurley, chairman of the division of graduate studies, knew well the circumstances of Ruth Eisemann-Schier's acceptance into the graduate school. Because of the marine lab's limited budget, it accepted annually for postgraduate study only about thirty of six hundred applicants. Ruth's educational credentials appeared sound. Her native tongue was Spanish. She spoke English competently. But Dr. Hurley wasn't impressed. "Then one day in the middle of the summer of 1968, Ruth simply showed up here," Dr. Hurley said. "She was well poised, very cool and self-possessed."

She was interviewed by Dr. Walter Drost-Hansen, chairman of the

division of physical and chemical oceanography, and accepted for the fall semester.

"She probably would not have been accepted except that she was here," said Dr. Hurley. "I was a little surprised; not a lot. Her background looked good and she came fully supported. We didn't have to worry about money. At least this was our understanding at the time."

Initially she seemed lonely at the marine lab. Rene Weldo, a young Cuban boy who worked in the stockroom, detected this. "She once said, 'I've been in Miami for two weeks and I never go out of the house because I don't know a soul in this city.' I introduced her all around and took her out to lunch. But there was something about her. You just couldn't get to know Ruth."

"She had a slightly canned smile, obviously part of her façade," Dr. Hurley said. "She seemed mild and meek and pleasant, very feminine. But put it this way. She was thoroughly conscious of being a female, and not a bad-looking female at that."

"Near the end of the first semester she was in my office talking about money. I suggested that she find some elsewhere because I couldn't do much about it. I had the feeling I was being manipulated to a certain extent."

His supposition was correct. Lyria Blanchard, his secretary, said, "She told me all she had in the world was \$1500. She didn't know if she would be able to pay her tuition and buy books. Even used books cost more than a hundred dollars a semester."

The lives of Ruth Eisemann-Schier and the man known then as George Gary Deacon first crossed at sea on a voyage of the *John Elliott Pillsbury*, the marine lab's largest research vessel.

On September 23, the *Pillsbury* had sailed from Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, out into the western Atlantic. One objective, listed last on the cruise plan, was to introduce new scientists to conventional marine-sampling procedures.

Among the new scientists were Dr. Diana Sanchez and Ruth Eisemann-Schier.

Apparently no one noticed anything between Deacon and Ruth during the first six days of the voyage.

The second assistant engineer, Edward Clup, a crew-cut Dutchman from Indiana, positively disliked Deacon. "He was a tub of lard. I called him Big George, the way he put away the chow."

Dunman, the chief engineer, got along well with Deacon, however. "He was sort of a tinker, always trying to improve things.

He had a very alert mind, very practical—like a ten-dollar mouse trap.”

On the sixth day of the cruise, a Saturday morning, the *Pillsbury* arrived at St. George, Bermuda, for a long weekend, and Deacon went ashore and soon found himself in the company of John Allen, a veterinarian on a postdoctoral fellowship studying whales and dolphin, and Diana Sanchez and Ruth. The one simple way to tour the island was to rent motorbikes. Ruth announced, however, she didn’t know how to ride. Would anyone let her ride on theirs?

The Negro who rented them for five dollars a day disapproved of two on a bike. The bikes simply weren’t built to take it

“Ruth asked several of us if she could ride two on a bike,” said Allen. “When she asked George, he said fine. Any time anyone paid any attention to George he was quick and obliging.”

Thus began the romance of George Deacon and Ruth Eisemann-Schier, she clinging to him on a motorbike, the balloon tyres squished almost to the rim under his two hundred and twenty pounds and her one hundred and ten.

“Ruth and Deacon’s affair was fairly obvious to everyone during the second half of the trip,” said Cubberly, the chief mate. “The chief scientist had to tell him to knock it off. ‘This is a ship. We’re at sea for scientific purposes. If you want to play around, do it at home!’”

The *Pillsbury* returned to Port Everglades October 7, ten weeks before the kidnapping of Barbara Mackle, and Ruth and Deacon ceased to attract attention as a couple. Except for a few seemingly chance encounters around the marine lab, they were seldom seen together.

On the morning of Thursday, December 19, as FBI agents began to ask questions at the marine lab, no one had seen either Deacon or Ruth there since the previous Friday, December 13.

Deacon’s absence wasn’t noteworthy. As long as he kept up with his work, which he did, he pretty well came and went as he pleased

Ruth had made a production of her departure. On the previous Friday she had left gifts for Mrs. Harrison, her landlady, and her two grandchildren.

“She gave the children little stuffed animals with music boxes inside them,” said Mrs. Harrison. “She seemed quite excited. She told me she was going to spend the holidays with a friend, Julie, at a ranch near Jacksonville. When I said goodbye to her, she just had her overnight case. She owned a big suitcase and said that her girl

friend had come by for it the day before so that she wouldn't have to worry about it. She told me she would be back January 5."

The news of the finding of Deacon's Volvo at the site of the ransom drop circulated swiftly through the corridors and offices of the University of Miami Institute of Marine Sciences that day. And soon there was talk that a girl was involved in the kidnapping.

"I bet that's Ruthie," said one student.

"Oh, come off it," replied Diana Sanchez. "Don't be so cruel."

VESSELS HAD DRIVEN Robert Mackle home from the Fair Isle Causeway. Robert had been in pit-bottom despair. "It's all over," he said. "We've bungled it."

It took more than an hour for the facts to solidify at the Mackle home. After pulling together the pieces by radio and telephone and agents from the site, Inspector Shroder approached the Mackle brothers.

"Now this is what we have," he began, and he laid out what he knew of the Volvo, the two names, George Deacon and Ruth Eismann-Schier, and the chase, their escape, and the recovery of the \$500,000.

"I don't care about the money," said Robert. "We've got to get another contact. We've got to let them know that it was completely accidental, and that I have the money and I'm ready to deliver it to them."

At FBI headquarters they tried to answer the incoming press inquiries. Robert Mackle, they said, had nothing to do with the failure of the payoff and he wanted to do business with the kidnappers again.

Jim Savage, a reporter for the *Miami Herald*, sat in the FBI office listening, and after the fifth or sixth call, he stuck a piece of paper in a typewriter, and typed:

I had nothing to do with the action Thursday morning of the Miami police who tried to arrest you and recovered the money which I left for you.

I regret that you did not get the money because my only interest is the safety of my daughter.

I pray that you have not harmed my daughter. I did everything you told me to do, and I had nothing to do with the accidental appearance of the Miami police on the scene.

Please contact me again through any channel. I will do anything you ask so my daughter will be freed.

"Is this about what he said?" Savage asked

"Fine," said an agent, and Savage put quotation marks on the paragraphs. At the bottom of the page he signed Robert Mackle's name. During the next twenty-four hours, the plea of Robert Mackle would be read repeatedly over television and radio and printed in the newspapers.

THE MIAMI OFFICE OF THE FBI had its work cut out for it that Thursday. Almost the entire one-hundred-and-twenty-five-agent force found itself assigned to the kidnapping. Besides the marine lab, agents converged on Miami International Airport, smaller airports where someone might charter a plane, the Trailway and Greyhound bus stations, the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad passenger station, and the tollgates of Sunshine State Parkway for automobile traffic north. The descriptions went out to all police agencies. The chance that agents or anyone else would detect them in the enormous outflow of traffic from the metropolitan area appeared remote; but it was a chance that couldn't be overlooked. Other agents began asking questions at the twenty-six hospitals in the county. Was anyone treated for a bullet wound? Officer Sweeney just might have hit him. Still other agents began a street-by-street search of hotel and motel parking lots in the vicinity of the drop site. Would Deacon try to rent a car since he had abandoned his Volvo? That was another possibility.

One lead dominated all others that morning: Deacon's address. Four cars of agents sped directly to the caravan park. Soon two helicopters chomped the air overhead.

Deacon had moved in during the summer after purchase of a repossessed caravan. He brought with him a wife, Dorothy, and two small sons, Adam and Vince.

Deacon's wife, Dorothy, was a slender dark-haired girl, quite intelligent, who had left for California with her children exactly a week ago Thursday. At least that's what she had told Diana Carmona, one of the few persons there she ever talked to.

They played tennis together. Occasionally she would baby-sit for them. Diana thought she was the only person who had ever been inside Deacon's caravan. Nearly everyone knew who he was. He was the big guy with the black bushy beard who didn't have much to say, "very closed mouthed", "not very friendly".

"He was very cynical, kind of bitter," said Diana. "He resented having to live in a trailer. But he was very bright and I liked him."

Agents wanted to know if anyone had seen Deacon lately. One

man had. This was Albert Bischoff, a retired house painter. He lived in the adjacent caravan, and he had seen Deacon the previous afternoon, Wednesday, the day after the kidnapping. He had talked to him sometime between four and five o'clock.

"I didn't recognize him when I saw him at first," said Bischoff. "He had shaved. His beard had gone. I walked up to him and said, 'I didn't know who in the hell you were.'"

"Deacon had his Volvo parked on my lawn and he had just finished washing it. It burned me up a little. I don't know why he didn't use his own lawn.

"He told me he shaved because he was taking off for six months. He said he was going out on the ocean for the university and that he was going out of the country. He said that a couple of times."

The mailman delivered the mail at the caravan park during the hubbub that Thursday morning and there was a Christmas card for Deacon from his wife in California. It had a return address. 1931 Cordilleras Road, Redwood City.

She had written that she had a nice flight, and that the kids were adjusting.

The Christmas card to George Deacon, like the hundreds of letters addressed to the Mackle residence, had funnelled through the US Post Office Department's Biscayne Annex in Miami. All the Mackle mail was put aside, and an agent was always on hand.

When Agent Cantey picked up the first batch sometime after eight o'clock on the Thursday morning, he scanned the pile and stopped suddenly when he saw a plain white envelope with no return address. In capital letters someone had typed:

MISTER ROBERT MACKEL
4111 SAN AMERO DRIVE
CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

The letter had been postmarked "MIAMI, FL. Dec. 18 pm" which was the previous day. It could have been mailed from any one of eighteen thousand and seven public mailboxes in the Miami postal district.

Agent Cantey noticed that both Mackle and Amaro had been spelled incorrectly. When he held the envelope up to the light, he suspected immediately it was from the kidnappers. He hurried to the Mackle home.

When he arrived he had the plain white envelope on top of the batch. "Here, this one, I think," he said.

Billy Vessels gave the agent his small Swiss army pocketknife with a scissor blade. Cantey extracted a Polaroid black-and-white photograph. It was Barbara.

The photograph was a close-up, her face only, her eyes open, the flash of the camera reflecting in her pupils, her even white upper teeth showing a trace of a smile.

A sign slanted under her chin with the single word, hand printed in angular letters, "KIDNAPPED". The lower-case letter d had been filled in, emphasizing the kid more than the upper-cased NAPPED. It appeared that she was lying on a blanket.

Inspector Shroder, holding the photograph by tweezers, asked Robert Mackle to look at it.

"Thank God she was alive when that was taken," he said.

Also in the envelope was Barbara's fourteen-carat-gold ring with the mounted opal and the two small diamonds.

Barbara's brother Bobby saw the photograph as a means to encourage his mother.

"I told Mom Barbara had a big smile on her face and that she was kidding the kidnapper," said Bobby.

"We kept constantly trying to reassure ourselves without any really great belief," said Frank Mackle. "What the hell would he do now? He didn't have the money. He had to be running and he might get shot. It was purely in the FBI's hands at this point."

From the radio monitor in the game room they could hear the static-punctuated conversations, agents dispatched one place, then another, the feedback of leads and information.

At the Epiphany Church in South Miami late Thursday afternoon, Father Joseph Biain sat in the living room of the rectory waiting for dinner at five thirty. Father Biain knew Robert Mackle. At one time Robert had regularly attended the 6:30 am Sunday Mass at Epiphany and Father Biain had said that Mass. Father Biain had also read the evening newspaper. He had read carefully Robert Mackle's plea to the kidnappers.

At about five fifteen the telephone rang.

"I picked up the phone and someone wanted to know if he could speak to a priest and I told him I was Father Biain. And then he told me he was the kidnapper of Barbara Mackle. He had some orders for Mr. Mackle. He told me to get in touch with Mr. Mackle and tell him to get the money ready again. He told me to tell him not to be nervous, that Barbara was OK. He said that she was buried some place and he said something about a breathing device. He mentioned

a battery. He said he couldn't guarantee that it would last for more than twenty-four hours. He told me to tell Mr. Mackle that we—he said we—believed him, that he had nothing to do with the police, told me that he would call back at eleven o'clock tonight."

In the Mackle home this latest message was related. The Mackles were elated. With the caller speaking of a burial alive, a breathing device, and batteries running out—information highly restricted—Inspector Shroder believed the probability excellent that the caller was indeed the kidnapper.

Agents rushed to Father Biain at Epiphany tape recordings of the kidnapper's two Thursday morning calls. The priest felt certain it was the same voice. Agents sat down to keep Father Biain company for the night. He would be there at eleven o'clock—or for how long it was necessary.

Frank Mackle had been astounded by the kidnapper's demand for money. "I just never thought he would call and try to get the half million dollars again. I thought he might try to make some deal to get away. But he wanted that money, period. I guess that's all he thought about."

The FBI was way ahead of him on the money. The \$500,000 had been counted and replaced in the suitcase. As darkness fell, the vigil began again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Charles Gullion was a house painter. He listened to the news broadcast on his car radio as he drove home from work late Thursday afternoon. He had followed the news of the kidnapping closely. In the past he had worked as a subcontractor on several Mackle projects, and that made the news a little more personal.

The newscaster spoke of the police chase, the \$500,000 ransom money found in a suitcase and the Volvo station wagon with a Massachusetts licence plate.

The mention of the Volvo struck him like a sledgehammer.

On the previous evening, Wednesday, Gullion had stopped at the Jewish Home for the Aged thrift shop. In his spare time Gullion often stopped at the thrift shop to buy old television sets to repair and sell. He had seen this man in a Volvo with a Massachusetts licence plate parked at the front kerb with a loaded trailer. The man wanted to sell the trailer. The thrift shop didn't buy used merchandise from

anyone; as a charitable organization, it only accepted donations for resale.

Curious, Gullion walked over and looked at the loaded trailer. "I think he said fifty or sixty dollars. I told him I would give him thirty-five dollars. We didn't haggle. He said OK and I asked him to drive his trailer over to my house and leave it in my backyard. He said he would."

The Volvo followed Gullion home.

"There was a girl with this guy. I noticed her Spanish accent. I said I didn't necessarily need the trailer. She asked the guy what he thought. And he said, 'We've got to get rid of it.'

"He had a shotgun, too. He wanted to sell it for thirty-five dollars. He showed it to me. I think it was a single barrel. I'm not sure. I didn't want it.

"They must have been at my house fifteen or twenty minutes. I asked him if he had a clear title to the trailer. He said, yes, and he gave me the papers. I could see they were made out to him, George Deacon.

"He was very calm and he was no dumbbell. He said that he and the girl had to see somebody and they had to leave. I gave him the thirty-five dollars."

Gullion rummaged through his trailer, totally uninterested in three boxes of books. He found an expensive recorder in a black attaché case, a large green tarpaulin, big enough to cover a coffin and some men's clothing stuffed into a duffel bag. Someone had worn the clothing while painting. Light grey enamel paint had been splattered over the front of a shirt, a pair of trousers and a plastic apron.

The trailer's contents meant nothing to Gullion in particular. He found an empty box which had contained a two-way radio, and a couple of old suitcases containing "some junky clothes and white outfit like you'd wear around a lab".

Besides the tape recorder, the black attaché case contained a spray can of deodorant and a pile of old letters.

"I wonder if he left this by mistake," he said as he gave it to his wife.

Penni Gullion began to read over the letters, feeling a little self-conscious. They weren't addressed to her.

They were addressed to a man in a prison in Tracy, California. His name was Gary Steven Krist. It appeared as if his mother had written them. They were postmarked Sitka, Alaska.

There were other letters, dated a year later, addressed to George Deacon in Massachusetts. They also seemed to be from the mother in Alaska. She had written him that some law-enforcement authorities had been around asking about him.

"Hey, honey," exclaimed Penni Gullion, "this belonged to a crook."

Now it was Thursday evening, twenty-four hours later, and Gullion kept listening to the news broadcast. About ten o'clock he made up his mind. He dialled the Miami office of the FBI. Within ten minutes two agents were at his front door.

In the FBI files in Washington, clerks quickly pulled the fingerprint file and the so-called rap sheet on Gary Steven Krist. Krist had been arrested at least seven times for car theft, once for burglary, and had escaped three times. He was a wanted man. He had last escaped from prison in California in 1966.

Was Gary Steven Krist the same man as George Deacon?

In Washington, the permanent records contained the fingerprints of approximately 82,000,000 persons, including everyone convicted of a felony in the United States. In a matter of minutes, there was no doubt whatsoever.

The fingerprints of Gary Steven Krist were identical to those of George Deacon found on the Volvo. Deacon's real name had to be Gary Steven Krist.

AT EPIPHANY CHURCH, Father Biain waited anxiously. At 10:35 pm however, twenty-five minutes too soon, the telephone rang in the Church of the Little Flower in Coral Gables.

Father John Mulcahy had not been more than a room or two from the telephone since he had taken the call from the kidnapper the previous day. He was edgy. When the telephone rang, he bolted from his chair. If it was the kidnapper, he wanted to make certain that he understood everything perfectly.

"This is the man who called you earlier about a very important matter, if you remember..."

"Uh huh," said Father Mulcahy. He recognized the voice.

"OK. I have another important matter to relate to you ... under the same conditions. Do you accept the conditions?"

"Yes. I certainly ..."

The kidnapper cut him off. "All right, then, this is most urgent. Tell Mackle that the new pick-up site is two point two miles on the left side of the road."

"Just a moment, now. I want to get this right now."

"You got that? On the left-hand side of the road on Southwest Eighth Street."

"On the left-hand side of the road," the priest repeated.

"Going west and it's two point two miles past the Little City Trailer Park. And tell Mackle he'll see a dirt road down there."

"Pardon me?" said Father Mulcahy.

"He will turn left, across the divider strip, and he'll see a little road. He's to go to the very start of the little road—and leave the suitcase."

"Put down the bag and leave?"

"OK."

"Yes, I have that. The thing is I'm not clear as to when he's to make the left turn. When he sees the dirt road?"

"That's right," the kidnapper said. "Yes. I've got to hang up now."

"Yeah, OK. And then he leaves the bag right there?"

"Right. Right out on the side of the road. Goodbye now."

"Fine, OK. Goodbye," said Father Mulcahy.

As soon as the news reached the Mackles' home, a decision had to be made: who could make the delivery?

"Uncle Frank and I got Dad aside," said Bobby, "and I said, 'Look Dad. You're in no shape to deliver that money. Let Billy Vessels go. He isn't as close to this thing as we are, and he isn't going to make the mistakes that you and I would.'"

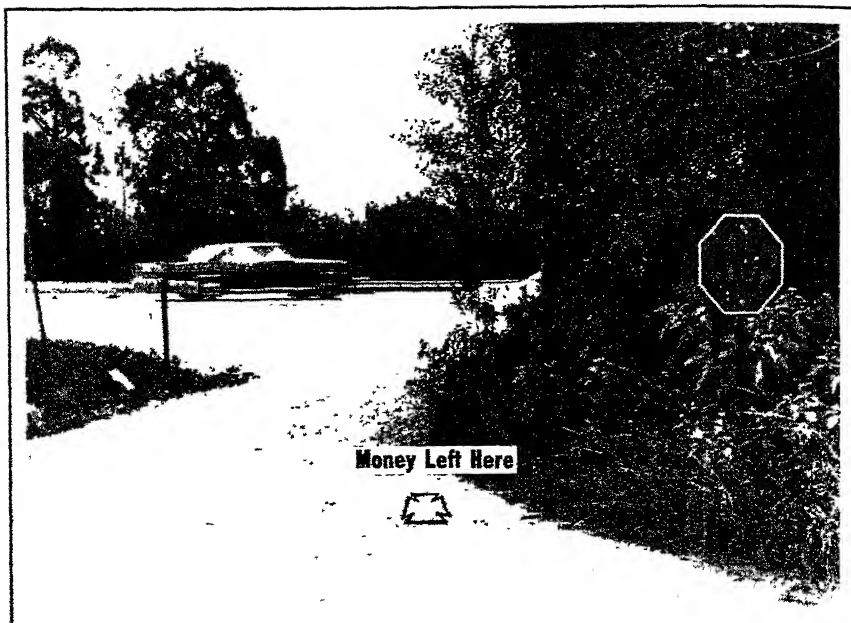
So it was that Billy Vessels made the drop within a few minutes of midnight. The same rules as the night before applied. FBI cars, now already converging towards holding areas, would keep away from the exact drop site, and they would not interfere.

At approximately 12:30 am, however, they dispatched a car to the site. The report came back moments later: "The package is gone."

And then the waiting game began.

Within another half hour there was a flurry of excitement over the monitor radio. A man and woman in a Rhode Island car, behaving suspiciously in the opinion of FBI agents, were driving along Tamiami Trail in the city of Miami. The couple furtively checked into a motel.

Agents discreetly made a few inquiries about the couple. Their momentary suspects had reason, perhaps, to sneak into a motel, but their names were not Krist, Deacon, Eisemann or Schier, and they in no way resembled them.



On the night after the aborted first ransom drop, the kidnapper telephoned instructions for the money to be left on the side of this dirt road.

The FBI was taking no chances. On the map Robert Mackle had noticed the distance between the drop site and old Tamiami Airport. Driving a mere three miles, the kidnappers conceivably could charter a small plane and fly across the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan Peninsula, which was close to Honduras, Ruth's native land. Agents already had the airport under surveillance.

In the game room, Robert Mackle read again the last sentences of the ransom note: "Within twelve hours after you deliver the money you will receive another phone call advising you of your daughter's whereabouts. A letter will be sent also to ensure the finding of your daughter."

Could he believe it? Every fibre of his body ached in uncertainty.

MRS. MARGUERITE YESSMAN, a secretary for the Deltona Corporation, read George Deacon's name in the newspapers Friday morning—and remembered it.

Deacon, as he identified himself, had telephoned her Monday,

November 11, 1968 "He was very polite and wanted me to mail him the annual report. He told me to mail it to him at the University of Miami Marine Institute on Virginia Key."

The annual report listed the company's financial status, total revenues, net income, total contracts receivable, total assets, and stockholders' equity.

Gary Steven Krist, quite obviously, had wanted to make sure that Robert Mackle could raise half a million dollars.

Another possible fragment of Krist's planning came from the memory of Mary Lou Braznell. She was married to Charles W. Braznell, a cousin of Jane.

After the FBI identified Deacon as Krist and distributed wanted flyers with photographs for both Krist and Ruth on the Friday, Mrs. Braznell remembered the night of November 27. Robert and Jane Mackle had celebrated their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary that night with a party for friends at the Key Biscayne Hotel.

"We arrived about an hour late," said Mrs. Braznell, "and as we walked into the lobby this man with the beard and this girl were leaving. They left in a blue sort of bus." To the Braznells the couple obviously did not belong.

Had Krist and Schier coldly familiarized themselves with their victims three weeks before the crime? Barbara had not attended the party. She was at Emory.

Throughout the day, Friday, the pieces began to fit together. The great overwhelming concern was Barbara. Where was she? Was she in fact buried alive? Was she already dead? The man and the woman who knew, the FBI believed, had to be Krist and Schier, and gradually, an investigation that had kept in excess of a hundred agents at labour almost continuously for three days and three nights began to isolate their precise acts.

On his way to work at 8:05 am Thursday, the morning of the first drop, a mailroom messenger boy at the marine lab had stopped for a red light at the corner of the Florida Bible College. This was eleven blocks northwest of the first drop site on the Fair Isle Causeway. Ruth Eisemann-Schier stood at the kerb.

"I recognized her right off the bat. I knew she worked in the lab," he said. "She looked kind of dazed. Her legs were all scratched. I was going to ask if she wanted a ride to work. But she looked so dirty I decided not to."

If the messenger boy was correct in his identification, a supposition could be made: the police action two and a half hours earlier at

Brickell Avenue had probably forced Ruth and Krist to separate. The two points were a mile and a half apart.

Soon the FBI had confirmation on the separation. Both Ruth and Krist, they discovered, had been seen at the Florida Bible College—but six hours apart. Apparently, they had selected the Florida Bible College—of all places—as a rendezvous site.

At about six forty-five in the morning Ruth Schier was seen sitting outside the college. She was seen again on the sidewalk shortly after seven. Then, at 12:45 pm that day, the Reverend Thomas Davis saw Krist in the chapel of the church.

Tom Davis arose and followed the man outside. "This guy just looked to me like he'd got out of jail; he had makeshift clothes, a grey flannel suit, his pants were ripped on the inside right leg."

By the time Davis caught up, the man had entered the back seat of a taxicab. "I asked him if I could help him," said Davis. "He said he was looking for a girlfriend. I asked him what her name was. He said Ruth Schier. I wanted to find out who he was so I introduced myself. I reached through the window and shook hands. He told me his name was Bob Denver. I noticed he had a Band-Aid and scratches on his hand."

Shortly after Krist left the Bible College, he walked into the Northwest Orient Airlines office in downtown Miami. He said he wanted a refund on tickets to Chicago. The tickets, made out to Mr. and Mrs. Schultz, had been purchased the night before, December 18, at Miami International Airport for Flight 729, Miami to Chicago, 7:00 am. Obviously, they had already missed it.

The clerk, Donald McGarry, asked his customer for identification and Krist produced his identification: George Deacon. McGarry questioned it. Why wasn't it Schultz?

"He told me his father had been in trouble," said McGarry, "and that's why he went under the name Deacon. To protect himself."

When McGarry eventually heard over a radio, the names Gary Steven Krist, alias George Deacon, he telephoned the FBI.

On Friday, agents began to check the two hundred and twenty-seven different locations listed in the Yellow Pages where a driver could rent or lease an automobile in the metropolitan Miami area. By noon Friday they knew that Krist had rented a lime-green two-door 1969 Ford Fairlane about four thirty the previous afternoon, giving his name as George Deacon.

The FBI quickly issued an all-points bulletin message to every major police agency in the southeastern United States. Besides the

description of the car the bureau described physically both Schier and Krist, and warned police, "Krist may be heavily armed. Consider extremely dangerous."

Soon, on the Friday morning, the FBI received another lead on Krist. He had been treated in the emergency room of Jackson Memorial Hospital Thursday night before his identity became public. He could have been there as late as ten o'clock—only thirty-five minutes before Father Mulcahy received the instructions for the second drop.

Dr. Burton H. Cohn, a young resident physician in surgery, saw him. Krist said he had tripped in his yard and sustained a laceration of the left side of his scrotum by falling on a pitchfork. Dr. Cohn, accustomed to farfetched explanations, didn't press the question. He noticed his patient's dishevelled appearance, and a heavy one or two days' growth of beard.

He sewed five nylon sutures to the wound, a superficial triangular laceration of one centimetre. Dr. Cohn also dressed Deacon's right knee. He probably would have never remembered the name Deacon except that his patient seemingly went out of his way to try to impress him with his knowledge of medicine.

Dr. Cohn instructed Deacon to return to the hospital to have the stitches removed in eight days. Deacon said it was impossible; that he worked at the University of Miami marine lab and that he would be at sea and nowhere near a medical facility. Dr. Cohn gave him a small suture-removal kit and told him how to remove the stitches, a simple procedure. FBI agents suspected that he had probably cut himself when he leaped the sharp-edged hurricane wire-link fence while running from Miami officer William Sweeney.

FBI AGENTS FRANK SMITH and Fred Doerner were among those at the University of Miami Friday morning. The marine lab there owned nine government-surplus trailers which served as private labs for scientists and storage. Krist, as Deacon, had the exclusive use of one such trailer. The agents wanted to see the trailer the moment they heard about it. They were in Dr. Hurley's office asking him if he knew anything about the construction of a fibreglass box.

"Box?" Dr. Hurley repeated. "How big a box?"

"Big enough to hold the body of a young woman," one of the agents replied candidly.

Beginning to comprehend, Dr. Hurley informed the agents that high-level lab technicians such as Deacon, were, in fact, expected to

build boxes. The marine lab built and used seventy-five to a hundred boxes a year, all sizes, plywood and fibreglassed for waterproofing. They needed them for specimens, keeping anything from a fragile gulper eel to a lemon shark.

Deacon's trailer contained a table, bookshelves empty of books, and the litter of construction labour on the floor—scraps of plywood, a screwdriver, pieces of fibreglass cloth.

They smelled a heavy odour of resin. On the floor the agents immediately detected splotches of an epoxy glue and grey paint in the outline of a rectangular box—a box large enough to contain the body of Barbara Mackle.

Agent Smith stared at the outline disbelievingly. He had read and reread the ransom note, and thought it hideous, and he had hoped against hope, and suddenly there was no doubt in his mind. It had to be true.

FBI interrogation at the lab uncovered a requisition form for twenty-four flat-edged wood screws and another, dated six weeks before, for exterior plywood, both with "G. G. Deacon" signatures.

"He came to me with the dimensions for a box," said Donald Stewart, the carpentry-shop foreman. "I told George how to butt the ends so it would fit tighter and be easier to assemble."

"He asked me about fibreglassing to make it watertight," said George Destin, a painter. "The question he wanted to know was, was it durable? I asked him if it was going to be knocked around, handled in a rough manner, and he said yes. I told him epoxy resin was best. You mix a hardener with it. He seemed to know all the mixtures. He was a very intelligent boy but you always got the feeling he thought he was a little bit above you."

"He told me he needed a fan for cooling, something that would work on a twelve-volt battery for a week to nine days," said Forrest Andrew, a research associate in the machinist shop. "I spent five hours going through catalogues trying to find a motor which would use very, very little current."

"He finally got a little electric motor from a hobby shop," said Joseph Patnode, the chief machinist. "He wanted to know how much air it would throw and we figured it out. He had a little aeroplane propeller and I put it together for him."

This had occurred about a month prior to the kidnapping. Agent Smith got on the telephone to Inspector Shroder. The kidnappers had indeed buried Barbara Mackle in a fibreglassed, plywood box.

The FBI did not convey this information to the family. It couldn't

possibly serve a useful purpose. If the kidnapper kept his word to call within twelve hours after delivery of the money, the Mackles would know the truth very shortly. The time was approaching noon. If he did not keep his word, Barbara's survival would depend on whether or not anyone accidentally discovered her.

Record checks in Utah and California would soon provide additional insight into the character of Krist.

As a boy of sixteen, Krist had served a year at the Utah State Industrial School in Ogden for theft, June 2, 1961 to June 4, 1962, and while there he was given a standard IQ test. His score astonished the school. Krist scored 142. Undeniably, by the criteria of the psychologists, Krist ranked as a genius.

Sheer intellectual ability in itself, of course, did not correlate necessarily with a man's guile or cunning. But the FBI knew it could not rely upon him to blunder about stupidly. This then was the escaped criminal from whom the Robert Mackle family awaited a call—brilliant, reckless, and warped.

CHAPTER EIGHT

You know how you try to make a situation better than it is? Well, I kept thinking to myself it is nice and cosy and warm here. If I were outside. I would be cold. This is warm. This is snug. What better place could there be than right here?

I really tried to talk myself into this. It didn't work for long. I was cold and I was wet and I ached, but it just didn't help to think about it. I would turn off the fan from time to time just to stop the noise. It was getting to me. And then I would deliberately sing happy songs, many of which I used to sing with Daddy.

I worried a lot about Daddy having a heart attack. I couldn't help from thinking about it. I could just picture Dad. He gets so nervous anyway. And I was thinking, I hope he calms down. I hope they give him some kind of pills to calm him down.

I kept trying to remember songs Daddy and I used to sing. They were corny, but they helped. "I've got a real good friend who is a ghost, don't mean to boast, but he is a pal of mine." Crazy little songs like that. "I'll sing you twelve holes, green grow the grass is grown ..."

And then I would think of walking on the Emory campus with Stewart, or going ice-skating with him. I remember he was falling

down on the ice and I was laughing, and one time it was cold and we were just running and playing tag and leapfrog; childish things but it was fun. And I was thinking of all the happy and fun things I could do.

THE TWELVE HOURS since the second ransom drop had come and gone. Robert Mackle sat in the vinyl-covered captain's chair in the game room. During the morning, the radio monitor in the game room had reported the search for a tourist pulling a trailer with a box on it into the Everglades.

"It took for ever to locate it," said Robert. "It was a man with a completely harmless box, but in my mind, it had my daughter."

With the FBI reports from Jackson Memorial Hospital and the University of Miami Institute of Marine Sciences, Inspector Shroder said he had better leave and go to headquarters.

Robert Mackle escorted him to the front door of his home. The FBI man grasped Robert by the shoulders.

"I'll be back," he said. He paused and smiled. "At the family reunion. Believe me, I will be."

Robert Mackle wanted desperately to believe.

IN THE ATLANTA OFFICE OF THE FBI at 12:47 pm, Trisha Poindexter, a pretty little twenty-three-year-old black-haired girl, was just about ready to go to lunch. Fifteen lines fed into the Atlanta switchboard. She answered one of them.

"I want to give you information on the Mackle girl," a man said.

"Just a minute," said Trisha. "I'll give you to an agent."

"No," the man said. He said it emphatically. "I want to give you some directions on how to find the capsule. I'll give these to you one time."

"I don't take dictation," the girl said. She wanted to transfer him.

"That's OK," he replied.

"He was very precise," she recalled. "He didn't rush me. I couldn't tell where he was calling from. I was a little afraid to ask any question. I thought he might hang up."

She began to write on a three-by-five-inch scratch pad.

"Out on I-85. Buford Highway. To Norcross. Stop light at Buford and Tucker. Proceed three point three miles from intersection. Small white house on a hill. Turn left. Dirt road a mile on right."

Then the man said, "Go up in there about a hundred feet in the woods. Do you have that?"

"Yes," Trisha said, not certain at all that she had taken everything down correctly.

"Bye," he said, and hung up

A few moments later Trisha was in the office of Jack Keith, the acting agent in charge. Norcross was a small town of about one thousand five hundred, about twenty-two miles northeast of Atlanta. Agent Keith and a supervisor and four other agents left immediately in three cars. Keith had the radio dispatcher order all units to assemble at the stop light at the intersection of Buford Highway and Tucker Road.

Proceed three and three-tenths miles, Trisha had written

In which direction? If the kidnapper had been more specific, Trisha had failed to write it down. Besides the four possible directions from the intersection, Keith saw a fifth road nearby. Any one could be the right one. Agents hurriedly began to check them out, searching for a white house on a hill three and three-tenths miles away.

Northwards on Buford Highway they found a small white house on a hill at about three and three-tenths miles. A two-laned blacktop turned off to the left. McGee Road it was called. A railroad track cut across the blacktop not far from the house. To the right a rusted three-strand barbed-wire fence broke for a dirt road one and one-tenth miles from the turnoff.

"This has got to be it," said Keith. He and four agents abandoned their cars and took to the woods. The dirt road ended one hundred and thirty feet from the blacktop at a junk pile near the foundation of a torn-down house.

The agents searched for a hill, an elevation. "Go up in there. A hundred feet." And there was no hill. The road was the highest elevation. Hills, rolling and uneven, sloped off erratically in all directions. They looked everywhere within a radius of one hundred feet. A hundred feet couldn't possibly be correct.

It was approaching four o'clock and Keith knew he wouldn't have much more daylight. He would have to send search teams on all five roads. They had to find that girl. She could be dying. She could be dying right now.

Suddenly one of the agents stopped.

"I hear a noise," he said.

He pointed to his feet. He kicked the undermat of fallen leaves and pine needles and he saw red clay, the fresh red earth of Georgia. It was twelve minutes after four o'clock.

I HEARD A LITTLE RUSTLE or something. It was the first time, absolutely the first time, that I thought I'd heard anything. I turned off the fan. And I didn't hear the rustle any more. I was straining so hard to hear. And I held my breath for a second and listened. And nothing. I was kind of let down.

I started pounding. I didn't scream. I didn't say anything. But I clenched my fists and pounded as hard as I could. I pounded and I pounded and my hands were hurting. I pounded for maybe thirty seconds, a minute.

And I stopped to listen for a few seconds and I didn't hear anything. I started pounding again. By this time I didn't think anyone was there, but I kept pounding anyway.

And while I was pounding I heard footsteps and then a man shouting. "Barbara Mackle! Barbara Mackle! This is the FBI!"

I just couldn't believe it.

I didn't say anything. It was complete happiness. I didn't know if it was the FBI out there or not. I didn't care. There was somebody out there and they knew that I was here. A human being.

I stopped pounding and listened and I heard someone say, "Answer me. Answer me if you are all right."

And I shouted, "I'm all right!"

I didn't know what was going on. Something was going on but I didn't know what. I heard someone yell, "She is over here! Here!"

Then I heard some scraping. I knew they were scraping away the dirt. They were behind my head. I kept thinking, here I am. I kept expecting the lid to open but it didn't. I wondered what was wrong.

Someone said, "Hold on! Hold on! We're getting you out!"

I was just smiling the whole time, and believe it or not, I was trying to comb the dirt out of my hair with my fingers.

ABOUT EIGHTEEN INCHES under the surface, agents uncovered one end of the box. They could tell it was made of wood and that fibreglass cloth had been glued to its surface. It had been painted a marine grey. It was about two and a half feet wide.

It took another four or five minutes to uncover a trapdoor-like lid, attached by four hinges, and screwed down with fourteen three-and-a-half-inch galvanized screws set about four inches apart. With a tyre iron and brute force, they tore it off.

It was thirty-two minutes past four o'clock in the afternoon.

For Barbara Mackle, it was dawn. It had been eighty-three hours till dawn.



This gravellike burial-site attracted the curious and inquisitive to a forest northeast of Atlanta, Georgia. The pit measured nine feet in length, two feet nine inches in width, and three feet three inches in depth. The nearest road was up a hill one hundred and thirty yards away.

I SORT OF PUT MY HEAD UP—and there were a whole lot of men, all agents as I learned later, looking down at me.

And I had this great big smile on my face. They were smiling too. I think, and I could see the tears in their eyes, tears and sweat.

I don't remember how I got out exactly. They pulled me out sort of under my arms.

Somebody said, "We've got her," and someone else asked, "How are you?"

I said, "Fine."

I tried to stand up. They helped me. And I fell forward. My knees just gave way. They caught me and one of the men said, "She can't walk."

And here I was grinning. I know I looked ridiculous, wet and dirty, and everything.

I said, "How is my family?" And one of the agents said, "Fine, fine."

I said, "Will you please tell them I'm all right."

And he said, "They'll know shortly."

And another agent picked me up and carried me towards a car. He wanted to know if anyone had been near the capsule. "Wasn't anyone around with you?"

I said, "No. Nobody came back after me."

He didn't say anything. No one said anything. They put me in the back seat of the car, and the man on my right had tears running down his face. I thought something was the matter. I really didn't think he was crying for me.

I said, "Is there something wrong?"

And he said no, and he sniffed and looked out the window, and then it sort of dawned on me, and I felt bad for even mentioning it.

They were all feeling awkward and retiring as if they were afraid to talk to me. So I said, "You are the handsomest men I've ever seen." And they all laughed.

The man in the front seat said, "Well, now we know something is wrong with you," and I laughed.

Then they asked me if I would mind looking at some pictures.

I said, "Oh, no, no," and I was excited because I thought I could help.

They gave me the pictures and I picked out the man and the girl right away. They knew both their names.

I said, "Oh, you already know." I was disappointed they already knew for I so wanted to help. I asked, "Have you got them yet?"

He said, "No. But we will."



On a bier borrowed from an undertaker, the coffin-style box is wheeled towards the DeKalb County courthouse during the trial of Gary Steven Krist. It weighed two hundred and thirty-one pounds. It was eight feet long and two feet square.

IN THE GAME ROOM six hundred and sixty-nine miles south of Atlanta, the afternoon had worn heavily. Once, several hours earlier, the telephone rang and Agent Lee Kusch grabbed it.

"Get off the line!" he had cried loudly. "Damn it, get off the line. I don't care what you want. My instructions are to keep this line open."

The ring had startled Robert Mackle. He would jump at the ring of the telephone in his home for months to come.

Frank Mackle was slouched upon one of the oversized couches in the game room adjacent to the telephone. No one was talking. The room was silent.

The telephone rang again, and again Agent Kusch picked it up. "Get off the line. Please ..." he began, and stopped in midsentence. "Oh? I'm sorry," he said. He gave the telephone to Frank Mackle.

"Hello," said Frank. He heard a male voice. Someone said, "Mr. Hoover is coming on the line."

He braced himself. He knew he would know in a second.

"This is Edgar Hoover," said the director of the FBI. "I have

some very good news. Barbara is alive and well. She will tele ...”

“She is alive and well!” Frank shouted, and he could see everyone staring at him.

Jane Mackle would not be able to remember the instant she learned of Barbara’s safety. She would not remember that Robert bounded up the stairs and embraced her and held her very tightly. A mother’s emotions broke in a throbbing joy. She would remember that Frank was still on the telephone when she came downstairs into the den, and she heard him cry, “Jane! Come quick. They have Barbara! She’s on her way to an agent’s house. I have been given a telephone number. We’ll be able to reach her at this number in fifteen minutes.”

WE GOT CAUGHT IN TRAFFIC on the way in and I couldn’t have cared less. We were driving straight into the big red sun the whole time, and I remember we were going through some very beautiful neighbourhoods.

We stopped eventually at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Donald Cochran. I got out of the car and I tried to stand up and I kind of went down to my knees. They caught me as I collapsed and I said, “I guess you’ll have to carry me again.”

Mrs. Cochran met us at the door. There was a doctor there and he wanted to examine me right away.

Mrs. Cochran said, “Would you like for me to be here?”

And he said, “Yes. Let’s get this nightgown off her.”

That’s when I first realized how dirty I was. I said, “Could I please have a bath?”

He said, “Let me examine you first,” and he wanted to know if I had been abused in any way.

I said, “No, I wasn’t,” and he started giving me an examination. Mrs. Cochran was there and she took off my nightgown. The doctor listened to my heart and said, “Are you sure you weren’t abused?”

I said, “No. I don’t want that kind of examination, please.”

He took my pulse and my blood pressure and asked me, “Did you ever give up hope?”

I said, “No. I’m a terrible optimist.”

He said, “That’s good. Nowadays, they are hard to find.”

I remember the Cochrans had a little boy and girl, and they were peeking around the corner. Then they scampered off.

I think it was just about then that one of the agents, Mr. Keith, told me that Mr. Hoover was going to call.

"Mr. Hoover?" I asked.

Mrs. Cochran said, "You are a pretty important young lady. You've been on the front pages of the paper for the past few days."

I said, "You're kidding," and she kind of laughed.

I didn't really want to talk to Mr. Hoover then; I wanted to talk to Daddy, and I wanted a bath. They sort of helped me into the bathroom. I didn't want to be carried. And then I saw myself in the mirror. I was so grimy. I don't know how I could have been that dirty. I had red clay under my fingernails and my hair, it was awful.

Mrs. Cochran sort of scrubbed me. Then she helped me into the bedroom. She asked me if I wanted some soup and I said, "That sounds delicious."

A little later Mr. Keith came in and he said, "You have a phone call."

They brought the phone over to the edge of the bed, and I said, "Hi, Daddy."

Mother and Daddy were both on the telephone together and Mother started to cry. And Daddy said, "Jane! Jane! Stop it. Now stop it! If you can't talk to her, you'll have to get off the phone." And Mother said, "I just can't help it." Daddy said he would fly up to Atlanta to get me right away. The plane was waiting.

I was asking how everybody was, and Daddy would say, fine, fine, everybody is fine. We hung up and I went back to bed. Mrs. Cochran said she would let me try to get some sleep.

It was real funny. Here I hadn't slept in three days, or if I had I couldn't remember it, and I should have been totally exhausted and I know I wanted to go to sleep. But I couldn't. I could stretch out. Oh, it was so great. All the way, it felt so good. I was thinking, am I really here? I was so happy. I lay back and thanked God. I thanked Him for being with me.

I wondered when Daddy would be here. I kept thinking, where are they? Why aren't they here? And then I said I am not going to play that game again.

At last I was told that there was someone here who wanted to see me. I knew it was Daddy.

I was sitting on my legs on the bed, sort of a kneeling position, and he came in and he started to hug me.

And I pushed him away and said, "I told you, you have an expensive daughter."

He was always telling me that. He just laughed and he hugged me a real long time and he didn't let me go. He didn't cry. I didn't

either, except that there might have been a few tears in my eyes.

I needed clothing and Mrs. Cochran gave me her fifteen-year-old daughter's clothes. I put on a miniskirt. It looked like a mini mini, it was so short, and I was very conscious of it. She gave me her blue coat with a fur collar on it. We walked downstairs and the house was full of agents. I don't know where they all came from. They all turned around and looked at me and I was thanking everybody. The company plane was waiting at the airport. We got into an FBI car and I was in the back seat and they asked me to put my head down. It was ridiculous and I was laughing.

When we arrived, all those people and reporters were waiting and I thought, this is for real. Daddy was saying, smile for the photographers, and he was laughing at me because I wouldn't believe him. I remember getting out of the car and all the lights went on and the flashes and everything. It was the first time anything like that ever happened. It was kind of a shock.

The pilots welcomed me aboard. They had me sign the autograph book because I was a celebrity. We took off right away.

CHAPTER NINE

Barbara Mackle was entombed in her plywood crypt for approximately eighty-three hours and thirty minutes—nearly four days and three nights.

FBI experts were to estimate that if the capsule's battery had burned continuously for the fan only it would have lasted another thirty-five or forty hours. However, if Barbara had left on the pump from the time she was buried, she would not have survived. The battery would have gone dead in a little over fifty hours. They also noticed a curious defect in the design of the pump. It didn't have any place to pump. Had water actually accumulated in the box, the pump would have merely squirted the water back inside.

An analysis of the liquid in the container left for Barbara to drink showed it contained chlorpromazine, a potent tranquillizer and anti-emetic to prevent nausea and vomiting. Here, then, were the tranquillizers Barbara had looked for and could not find.

Even before the agents found Barbara, the FBI in West Palm Beach, Florida, had received a telephone call about Gary Steven Krist.

Norman Oliphant, a boat dealer with the friendly outgoing



Shortly after her rescue, Barbara Mackle, leaning on the arms of her father and brother, makes a brief appearance for photographers outside their family home.

manner of a good salesman, felt a little peculiar as he telephoned the FBI office in West Palm Beach a few minutes before four o'clock Friday afternoon.

"Look," he began apologetically, "this is D & D Marine Supply.

All this may be crazy, but I think I might know something about the Mackle kidnapper. I just sold a boat to a guy who paid me in twenty-dollar bills. He had a car rental from Miami.”

“Stay exactly where you are,” the FBI agent replied. “We’ll be over in a minute.”

“And they came around the corner on two wheels,” said Oliphant.

His customer, clean shaven, wearing pressed trousers, white shirt and boat shoes, his hair neatly combed, had walked in about 8:30 am that Friday. The customer said he wanted to look at a boat that would go forty miles an hour. He wanted to do some water-skiing and wanted something that would really go.

Oliphant showed him two or three boats and then an Orlando Clipper, a sixteen-foot outboard with an eighty-five-horsepower Johnson motor. “That’s got a convertible top, great. I’ll take it,” the customer said.

Oliphant recalled: “Just bingo, ‘I’ll take it.’ That’s not too unusual though. We have a lot of impulse buyers.”

He wanted to know how soon it would be ready. “In an hour?”

Oliphant told him it would take at least three hours to rig up and asked for a deposit. The customer gave him a fifty-dollar bill. Oliphant also wanted to get the customer’s name on a title application. He saw his customer’s identification—a draft card that turned out to have been stolen—for Arthur Horowitz.

“To me he looked Jewish. Maybe just out of college with a pocketful of money; a young attorney or someone. He spoke very intelligently. He knew something about boats.”

He was in and out three or four times while Oliphant was rigging the boat. He bought a big Igloo cooler, a pair of binoculars, a ten-power spyglass, a good portable radio, radio directional finder, thermal blanket, sleeping bag, a hand battery lantern, a packet of tools, a five-gallon plastic water container, and “enough charts to go to Timbaktu.”

He said he had more shopping to do and left Oliphant again. Oliphant’s oldest boy, Doug, a charter-boat captain, came by and began looking through the marine charts. Suddenly he blurted out, “Boy, this is a screwy deal. Wouldn’t it be funny if we were rigging this up for the Mackle kidnapper?”

“For Christ’s sake, don’t be ridiculous,” Oliphant retorted.

The man Oliphant knew as Horowitz returned again shortly after twelve noon. He had a duffel bag, and a couple of laundry sacks too. He announced he was ready to go.

"He pulled out an ordinary brown-paper sack and handed a bundle of twenties. They still had the bank band on them. He said, 'You'd better count it.' I counted it and it was exactly right, a thousand dollars. He gave me another thousand-dollar bundle and I gave him the receipt. Then he lit out. That was the last I saw of him."

He had taken off in a southerly direction towards Fort Lauderdale.

"My boy was upset. When he heard about those twenties, he told me it might really be the kidnapper. Then it began to gnaw on me. I knew something was wrong." He telephoned the FBI.

In fairly rapid order, the FBI was able to trace the movements of Gary Krist in West Palm Beach.

He had first been seen there about 8:30 am Friday in the Army and Navy Salvage Store a block from the D & D Marine Supply. From there he apparently drove to Spencer's Boat Company, where he purchased the marine charts and camping gear. Krist paid in cash, \$346.41. He gave eighteen twenty-dollar bills.

Krist then drove his Merlin-Rent-A-Car Fairlane to the Allright Parking Station and asked to "store it" for ten days. He paid the attendant for ten days in advance, \$15. The time clock showed 11:30 am, Friday, December 20.

When FBI agents located the car the next morning, they would impound it and search it and find locked in the back trunk the suitcase delivered at the second drop. It was empty.

From the Allright parking lot he apparently had taken a taxi to the vicinity of the Dixie Market. "We seen someone come in and use the pay phone on the pillar in the store," said Mrs. Guethle, the market's owner. "It might have been Krist. We have a suspicion it was him."

When the kidnapper telephoned the Atlanta office of the FBI, he gave the long-distance operator the number of the phone in the Dixie Market. The telephone security manager would locate the toll ticket the next day.

Within minutes after Agent Robert Schachner began to question Norman Oliphant, the first coast-guard search and rescue helicopter lifted. Its mission: locate an Orlando Clipper, eighty-five-horsepower Johnson outboard, white hull and top, turquoise deck, two fifteen-gallon gas tanks aboard.

Before nightfall the coast guard would have another helicopter airborne and two cutters searching the ocean. But the sun set at 5:35 pm. There wasn't enough time. The search would have to begin

again at daylight, and obviously, if Krist ran all night they would have considerably more territory to cover. Furthermore, instead of going north or south along the Florida coast or eastwards towards the Bahamas, Krist could have gone west across the peninsula of Florida by means of the Okeechobee Waterway.

About eight o'clock Saturday morning, as coast-guard cutters and aircraft began a search of the Florida Atlantic coast, it became clear that Krist had in fact made it through the Okeechobee Waterway and was already somewhere in the Gulf of Mexico.

He could have hardly selected a more cumbersome escape route. Waiting for the waterway locks, identifying himself and his boat repeatedly, hung up over night, channelled for miles in a canal only fifty feet wide, Krist would have been a sitting duck to any sort of organized force that could have found him. Yet he had succeeded. For sheer brazenness—or sheer stupidity—it rivalled his act of the day before, the purchase of the boat with twenty-dollar bills pulled from a brown-paper sack.

Where was he now? Where was he going?

He could be in the town of Fort Myers. Or if he managed to get very far south, equipped as he was, he could get into the Ten Thousand Islands. There he would be extremely difficult to find.

The FBI diverted its east-coast search towards Fort Myers. An agent in Miami telephoned the Tampa office to notify the agent in charge, Joseph F. Santoiana. He took off at once in an H-52 turbine jet chopper.

The twin-engine Grumman Albatross out of the coast-guard base in Miami were already in the air. Agents Edward James Tully and Ed Putz were aboard one flight and they were diverted to the Gulf coast. They flew along the Intracoastal Waterway north of Fort Myers. Every time they spotted anything resembling a white Orlando Clipper, the Albatross would swoop low and circle. Everyone waved back.

At 10:30 am, while flying at about five hundred feet at the mouth of San Carlos Bay, they spotted what they thought they were looking for—the configuration of an Orlando Clipper, the right colours.

Again the Albatross swooped low. They saw a lone white male. He didn't wave back. Why wouldn't he wave? Everyone else did. They were almost certain. They radioed the location. There was not much else they could do. At this point, there wasn't much Krist could do either. His craft sped northwards in the Gulf of Mexico now, just off the islands of Sanibel and Captiva.

For a mile, five miles, ten miles, fifteen, he raced along the coast at full throttle, a rooster-tail wake streaking behind. Effortlessly, the Albatross watched from the sky. If ever an albatross hung from the neck of a mariner, Krist had to know it that Saturday forenoon of December 21.

In the southbound Tampa helicopter, Agent Santoiana could hear the transmissions of the Albatross. At one hundred knots at five hundred feet, they were also closing in fast. Suddenly, they could see him.

In all probability, Krist spotted the chopper a few seconds before; for abruptly, he swung his Orlando Clipper into a one-hundred-and-sixty-degree turn. He piloted straight for land. Within a minute, he ran aground in the sand flats of the closest island, Hog Island.

Hog Island had a certain primeval beauty. Uninhabited, it lay in a mostly submerged jungle of mangroves and swamp. The alligators, the water moccasins, the flamingoes and a hundred other creatures of the wild held the proprietary rights, and the orchids bloomed wild. At high tide the warm water of the bay swirled in at a depth of three to six inches everywhere except a rim of land three feet above sea level on the northwest shore. At low tide Hog Island was muck and mud and mosquitoes.

From the Albatross and the still-approaching helicopter, agents could see Krist abandon his boat. Carrying a small satchel, he jumped from the boat, and ran through the shallows at low tide, trying desperately to reach the cover of the tree line. He kept looking up over his shoulder.

The agents held their fire. The FBI wanted him alive. Krist disappeared into a swamp jungle. It was 12:05 pm.

If Hog Island offered refuge to a fugitive, it also imprisoned him. The Myakka Cutoff, a narrow flat less than five hundred yards wide, separated Hog Island from the mainland to the northeast, and this was the most likely route of escape. But assuming that Krist could make it across the Myakka Cutoff, there was nothing but marsh and mangroves for another six miles.

The manhunt began.

Within a minute after Krist vanished into mangroves, the chopper settled in low, the water spraying fiercely under its rotating blades, and disgorged Agents Santoiana, Sullivan and Hudson. They were the first of about eighty-five agents to converge on the site that afternoon. They ran cautiously towards the tree line, carrying machineguns, and quickly discovered what would become terribly

apparent in the ensuing hours: a man could be five yards away and impossible to see.

By late afternoon, agents were still trying to fight their way through the mangrove swamps in a semblance of order. Those who had arrived the earliest were easy to recognize. The longer a man had been there the more slime, muck and mud clung to his clothing. Some seemed encrusted in a black vile-smelling ooze.

Agent Irwin Davis was the first man to reach Krist's grounded Orlando Clipper. He boarded the craft and found two small blue drawstring laundry bags. Opening them, he could see stack after stack of twenty-dollar bills. They would total \$479,000.

By late afternoon the locals had eleven bloodhounds on Hog Island. But they proved almost useless. FBI agents, stalking through the mangroves for at least three hours, had made it almost impossible for a dog to stay with a scent. The incoming tidal flow confused things even more and the dogs, pulling at their leashes, kept twisting themselves up in the clawlike aerial roots, sinking to their bellies in the muck.

As night fell the bloodhounds yapped and bayed, and when they fell silent, the creaking of frogs and the incessant chirping of crickets competed with the walkie-talkies, the car radios. The air was alive with calls for more flashlights, searchlights.

For a while an Albatross showered the island with flares, brilliant two million candlelight globs of light parachuted from two and a half thousand feet. They lit up the sky for three minutes each, burning out abruptly just before landing.

Helicopters chomped the air, each with its two landing lights blazing, a bright "hover" light pointing straight down, and a fourth mobile spotlight shifting from the cockpit.

Some time after eleven o'clock two men heard off in the distance the distinct sound of movement, a gentle splashing, then silence, wading again, then silence.

"Hear him?" whispered McLeod, the "major" of the Charlotte County Sheriff's office. His companion was a butcher from the mainland, called Buffington.

If they could hear him, he could hear them, McLeod reasoned, and wordlessly they waded offshore into deeper water up to their chests. McLeod carried an old army carbine over his head. Buffington had a .38-calibre pistol and a flashlight which he kept turned off.

They had devised a plan. They would wade parallel to the island

in the deeper water until they were about even with the noise, then come ashore. When they hit the high ground—two or three feet above the water line—Buffington would turn on the light. They'd stay about thirty feet apart. "If he opens fire, one of us should get him," said McLeod. Each man had six children. Neither forgot it that night.

They were perhaps thirty yards offshore. They thought they were about even with him.

"OK," McLeod whispered, and the two men waded ashore, highly conscious of their unavoidable splashing.

Buffington, his .38 pistol in his right hand, turned on his flashlight with his left. He took maybe three or four steps, swinging the light in an arc back and forth. To his right, ten feet away, Gary Krist crouched motionless in a tangle of mangrove roots. The beam caught him. Another few feet and they would have walked right by him.



Twelve hours before his capture, Gary Steven Krist abandoned his boat on the Gulf coast of Florida at the approach of a coast-guard helicopter. In this photograph, taken from the helicopter by an FBI agent, he is seen fleeing towards Hog Island.

McLeod, fifteen feet the other side of Krist, levelled his carbine. "Stand up!" he said. "Put your hands on your head!"

Krist stood up. He put his hands on his head. He said nothing. Hooked on his arm. Krist had a grey metal satchel. McLeod took it away from him, and ran his hands over Krist searching for a weapon. In Krist's right hip pocket, McLeod found a sheathed hunting knife. He took it.

Buffington gave McLeod the flashlight and manacled Krist's wrists behind his back.

"I have rights," Krist said

McLeod read him his rights. Then with a gun to Krist's back and Buffington tightly gripping the handcuffs, Krist was marched along the sand flats to captivity. It was 12:28am on Sunday, December 22, 1968.

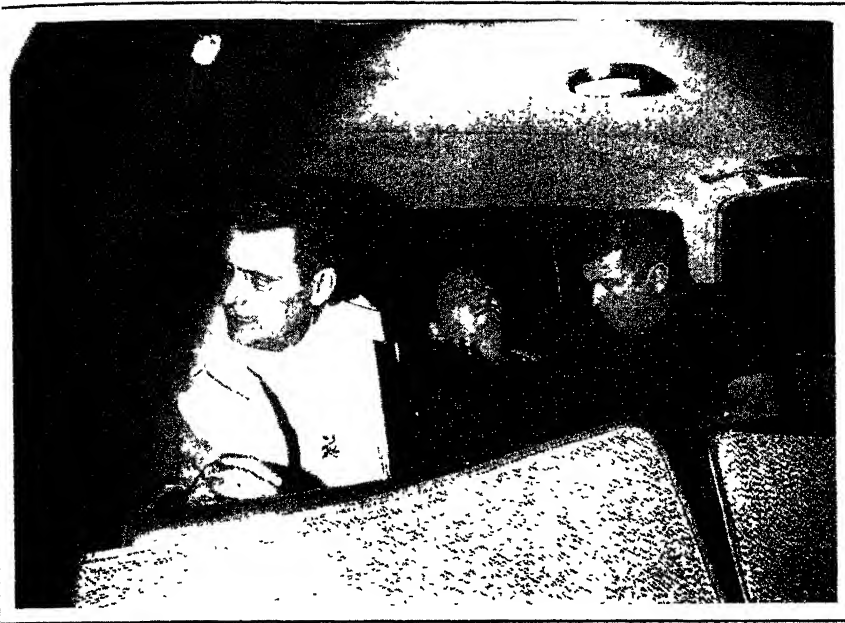
ON THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY, the FBI put Ruth Eisemann-Schier on its list of "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives". She was the first woman to receive this recognition since the Bureau established its wanted list in 1940.

She had not been seen since the morning of the first random drop. She couldn't have had much money the FBI believed. Her purse and billfold had been found in the Volvo. Except for her balance in the First National Bank of Washington, D.C., untouched since the previous June and now closely watched, the FBI could find no other source of money for her. They suspected Ruth might try to return to Honduras or re-enter Mexico, and personnel of the Border Patrol, the Immigration Naturalization Service, and the Bureau of Customs were asked to be particularly watchful. Law-enforcement officers in Mexico and Honduras quietly conducted their own investigations on the chance that she might try to contact someone she knew for help.

Police in Catacamas, Honduras, where her mother lived, could find no one who had heard from her. Ruth's mother went into seclusion in the days after the crime.

The FBI also speculated on Ruth's possible death. Could Krist have murdered her after the second drop so he wouldn't have to share the \$500,000? If she had been in the rented Ford Fairlane he would have had ample opportunity on the trip from Miami to West Palm Beach. Some of the back roads ran through swamp and cypress country as isolated as the Everglades. A body might go unfound for years.

What had happened to Krist's weapons? In the Volvo, FBI agents



Back on the mainland, shortly after his capture, Gary Steven Krist is escorted by FBI agents to a hospital in Fort Myers, Florida. He was suffering from exhaustion. He still had in his possession seven of the 25,000 twenty-dollar bills in ransom money.

had found ammunition for both a carbine and a shotgun. Neither weapon had been found, nor ever would be.

Krist himself, the one man who might logically provide some answers to the whereabouts of Ruth had sulked in silence in the days after his capture. He had refused even to admit his identity as George Deacon.

Krist's wife, Carmen (also known as Dorothy Deacon), a slender woman of twenty-two with long dark hair, knew very little about Ruth Eisemann-Schier, her whereabouts, or her role in the crime. But she knew a great deal about her husband.

"I knew what he was when I married him. I went into it with my eyes open. The children and I are happy and nobody has to sing any sad songs for me," she said in Redwood, California, a few months after the crime, but she looked terribly unhappy, gaunt, easily mistaken for a woman much older. And, although she never said

anything that proved preknowledge of the crime, she made statements that opened up considerable conjecture.

She said Gary would have been "clever enough" to have employed the use of the social register in selecting a victim. He might have checked a dozen or more prospective names, she suggested.

Carmen had met Krist at a roller rink in Redwood, California, her hometown, in December 1964 when she was eighteen and he was twenty-three. "We were very much attracted to each other right from the start. We eloped and were married by a justice of the peace on March 26, 1965."

Gary, she said, was the most fascinating man she had ever known. "He was out on parole when we were married. We lived together for three years, except for the times he was in jail." She said he was a "good father and a kind husband, very considerate."

Gary, she said, "told me several times the dream he used to have about kidnapping someone to make a lot of money." It was just a childish dream and he had forgotten it, she said.

"Gary wanted to do a lot of things but he was frustrated because he didn't have much money," said Carmen. "He wanted to own a ranch and machine shop and be his own boss. He doesn't want to lead a mediocre life. He wants to be remembered."

Carmen said she detected a significant change in him when he came home from the Bermuda cruise on the *Pillsbury*. Not unnaturally, she was suspicious, and she asked him if he had met another woman. He denied it.

Sometimes he would not come home for several nights. Once she checked to see if he was on the *Pillsbury*. He wasn't. She became depressed and cried a lot.

The week before the kidnapping, "he told me he just didn't love me any more. He said he wanted a two-month separation."

Carmen said her husband also talked of "making a big score". She knew that he had a partner in some "scheme to make a lot of money". But, apparently, it never dawned on her that this particular person was a woman. Krist spoke of his partner as a "foreigner". He said his partner had several passports and connections in Mexico and knew a lot about drugs.

On the night of Friday, December 13, 1968, Krist took his wife and two small boys to Miami International Airport. He appeared extremely restless and impatient, and he left his wife and family about an hour before the flight. It would be the last time he would see them.

ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 1969, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, a young blonde of twenty-five, Jean Price, casually opened a thick manilla envelope. She was a fingerprint-classification technician for the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation. The envelope contained a stack of fingerprint cards from the Central State Hospital in Norman, Oklahoma, submitted as part of a routine employment-application procedure.

Sometime after ten o'clock that morning Jean Price picked up an employment-application form of a Donna Sue Wills, white female, age eighteen. Routinely, unhurriedly, she checked the name in an index-card system. Negative. The Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation had never heard of a Donna Sue Wills.

So she began to note the inked impressions of loops, ridges and whorls on the fingerprint card. Then she walked over to the rows of metal filing cabinets which contained about 1,250,000 cards, all properly organized for comparison purposes. In a moment, she pulled out a card.

"I almost fainted," she said.

There, in large capital letters, read: "WANTED BY THE FBI". Underneath was the name: Ruth Eisemann-Schier. She recognized the name instantly.

Seventy-nine days before, agents were to discover, the Thursday of the aborted first ransom drop, Ruth Eisemann-Schier had boarded a Greyhound bus at the downtown bus station in Miami a few minutes after two in the afternoon. She had purchased a one-way ticket to Houston, Texas—1,244 miles from Miami. At 11:30 pm Friday, after thirty-three hours on the road, the bus arrived in Houston. Ruth immediately took a room at the Houston YWCA, and began answering help-wanted ads in the Houston newspapers. One was for a live-in Latin-American maid in one of Houston's more wealthy residential neighbourhoods. Ruth prevailed upon the cashier to telephone for her.

"She lived with us for six weeks," said Lois Woolfolk, the attractive wife of Robert Woolfolk, a chemical engineer. "We never suspected anything."

As Irma Hilga Sanchez, Ruth kept the Woolfolk house and cared for the two Woolfolk children, Frank, eight, and Robin, two and a half. Only the first day, after Robert Woolfolk had interviewed her, was he concerned. She couldn't provide any reference. She explained that she was from Laredo and that her father had become an alcoholic. That was why she had left home. She made a favourable

impression and Robert Woolfolk said he would pay her thirty-five dollars a week and give her room and board.

She never wanted to go anywhere. She never dated. She watched a lot of television with the children and she read. "I would drive her to the library; that's the only place," said Lois Woolfolk.

On Saturday, February 8, Ruth said she wanted to visit a friend in San Antonio. She said she would return Monday. The Woolfolks took her to the bus station and bought her a round-trip ticket. In San Antonio Ruth exchanged her return trip to Houston for a one-way ticket to Oklahoma City. On the Sunday, she checked into the YWCA in Oklahoma City as Lisa Wandernberg. For two nights she shared a room with an eighteen-year-old girl named Donna Sue Wilks.

Ruth stole Donna Sue Wilks's identification papers from her purse. On Tuesday, February 11, she took a bus to Norman, a town known primarily as the site of the University of Oklahoma. A college town, any college town, appeared to Ruth to offer sanctuary, familiarity yet anonymity. She had lived most of her life as a student. She knew the role. She knew the part.

She stayed in the cheapest room in a big old rooming house on fraternity row in Norman. Through the want ads Donna Sue Wills eventually found employment as a carhop at a drive-in restaurant at 1808 North Lindsay Street in Norman. Ruth had changed the Wilks to Wills.

Prophetically, the name of the restaurant was the Boomerang. As all carhops, Donna started at a dollar an hour plus tips.

Among the Boomerang's daily clientele were two officers of the Norman City Police Department. An FBI wanted poster for Ruth Eisemann-Schier had been thumbtacked to a station bulletin board. Neither officer recognized Ruth. Her only disguise was a false hairpiece. She wore no make-up.

It was her landlord who first suggested to Donna that she apply for work at Central State Hospital. He liked the girl. He told her she could make \$2.45 an hour at the hospital.

Donna applied on February 13. She impressed the personnel director. "We will notify you for an interview in a week or so."

The notification came February 26. Could she be at the hospital the next day? Enthusiastic, almost rhapsodic, she said she would.

If Ruth Eisemann-Schier felt a sudden tightening of the noose around her neck that day as she accompanied a small band of other applicants for a "purely routine" fingerprinting, it wasn't apparent.

Logically, she might have excused herself to go to the rest room, professed illness, or in one fashion or another, fled. But she submitted to the fingerprinting, saying nothing.

Six days later, on Wednesday, March 5, 1969, Donna Sue Wills told her landlord that she intended to go home to Edmond to visit her father. She had stolen a purse from Julie Lynn Ferguson, a pert and bouncy coed of twenty-one. Julie Ferguson had used the rest room at the Boomerang the day before and laid her purse on a ledge. It had disappeared. It contained identification papers and her Oklahoma driver's licence.

Ruth Eisemann-Schier, alias Irma Hilga Sanchez, alias Donna Sue Wills, was about to become Julie Ferguson. Before she left that morning, she cleaned out the dresser drawers in her room, stripped the bed, and neatly folded the bedding.

Two FBI cars reached the Central State Hospital in the early afternoon. It took Agent Burns a few minutes to check the records. He asked for Donna Wills's address and within ten minutes Burns suspected the worst: she had run. There were the empty drawers, the folded bedding.

Agents hurriedly began asking questions. A roomer said Donna might be at the Boomerang. At five minutes after three o'clock, Agent Burns's car halted in the driveway of the Boomerang. At the glass side door inside the Boomerang at the carhop counter, Agent Burns saw a girl in orange tennis shoes, orange slacks, and a white vinyl coat with brass-plated buttons. The girl looked up. The car doors flew open. Wordlessly, the girl walked out to meet the agents.

"Are you Donna Sue Wills?" Agent Burns asked.

"Yes," the girl said.

"Are you Ruth Eisemann-Schier?" he asked.

"Yes."

He started to tell her she was under arrest. "We are from the Federal Bureau of Investigation," he began.

"Yes," the girl said. "I know."

CHAPTER TEN

Ruth Eisemann-Schier confessed to the kidnapping of Barbara Mackle.

FBI agents questioned her for several days and she made a long formal statement which she modified, then remodified. She made

another statement in the presence of her own lawyer in her native tongue. Spanish.

There was no third party to the crime. She and the man she knew as George Deacon committed the crime alone, she said, and the FBI, after its massive investigation, came to the same conclusion.

Most of Ruth's statements would be corroborated clearly and completely. Except for a distortion of her own role and a few errors in memory, she told the truth.

She cast herself as an innocent, helpless in her love for Krist, dominated by his will. Her only concern, she professed, was Barbara. She had wanted to crawl into the box and stay with Barbara the entire time, she said. George wouldn't let her. She was always "acting on his instructions".

Ruth's Spanish statement, translated by an FBI interpreter is an absorbing document. In part it reads:

"Sometime in early December, 1968, Deacon drove me by the residence of Mr. Robert Mackle in Coral Gables, Florida. He pointed out the house to me as that of his prospective abduction person and identified her by name as Barbara Mackle. . .

"Also, in early December, 1968, I first entered the trailer parked at the Marine Science Institute where Deacon was constructing the capsule. Because I was concerned for Barbara, I climbed into the capsule and asked Deacon to close the lid, in order that I might know the type of feeling a person would experience while imprisoned in such a capsule. It was a frightening experience, but in spite of everything, knowing she was an intelligent person, I convinced myself she would probably be all right. . .

"I wish to explain at this time that I was very much in love with Deacon and I was prepared to do anything he asked of me. . .

"On the evening of December 11, 1968 . . . Deacon again drove me by the Mackle residence and I observed him leave the car and place a small article beneath a palm adjacent to the Mackle residence. He informed me that he hid the ransom note. . .

"Upon arrival in the Atlanta, Georgia area, Deacon and I stopped on the campus of Emory University. Deacon made two or three telephone calls to various offices on the campus inquiring as to the exact whereabouts of Barbara Mackle. Through these telephone calls he was successful in ascertaining that Barbara was temporarily residing at the Rodeway Inn Motel.

"Subsequent to the visit to the university we continued looking for a prospective burial location. Ultimately Deacon selected a site to



Seventy-eight days after the abduction, FBI agents found the Honduras-born Ruth Eisemann-Schier working as a carhop at a drive-in restaurant called the Boomerang in Norman, Oklahoma. She was living under the name of Donna Sue Wills.

bury the box in a highly remote wooded area. He selected the area in which the box was to be buried because he could drive the car into the wooded area immediately adjacent to the spot where he would dig the hole. Upon arrival at the burial site, Deacon slid the box out of the Volvo onto the ground. I assisted him in camouflaging the box with leaves and sticks.

"Deacon made a telephone call to Mrs. Robert Mackle at the Rodeway Inn. He did not identify himself but stated to her that he had a registered letter he would deliver to her. He explained to me that the purpose of this call was to verify the fact that Mrs. Mackle and Barbara were present at the Rodeway Inn. . . .

"On Monday morning, December 15, 1968, Deacon and I returned to the remote area where we had placed the capsule the day

before. Deacon began to dig the hole in which he was going to place the capsule. The digging was difficult for him and he complained that I wasn't helping him, so I attempted at one time to help him, but it was much too difficult for me and he had to dig the entire hole himself. . . .

"Some time after, Deacon and I stopped at the Pancake House Restaurant at the Rodeway Inn for something to eat. While there he observed a uniformed policeman's cap and Deacon decided to steal the officer's cap, which he did. Deacon decided that he would use the policeman's cap and by impersonating a police officer he could easily entice Mrs. Mackle to open her motel-room door at an early morning hour. He liked this idea but decided that policemen ordinarily do not wear beards and he, therefore, shaved off his beard.

"At approximately 4:00 am on December 17, 1968, Deacon drove me to the Rodeway Inn, at which time Deacon was wearing a yellow sweater and the policeman's cap. . . . He was successful in enticing Mrs. Mackle to open the door and he immediately lunged in and I followed. . . .

"When we arrived at the burial, I was so concerned for the well-being of Barbara that I pleaded with Deacon to let me remain at the burial location until he obtained the ransom money and returned to pick me up. Deacon would not permit me to follow this course of action and instructed me to accompany him. . . .

"The lid to the capsule was then closed and I held a light while Deacon placed the screws through the lid. When the capsule was completely covered with soil we again camouflaged it with leaves and sticks.

"We returned to the Volvo station wagon, at which time Deacon told me he did not want me to be seen in the car so I lay down on the floor of the car between the front and rear seats. I remained there crying until arrival at Jacksonville. . . .

"On December 18 . . . George was very angry with me, saying that I was a "poor sport" and that I was not cooperating with him. From that moment he was very abrupt with me and did not explain anything he was doing.

"After selling the trailer, Deacon and I proceeded to an Italian restaurant near the shop where the trailer was sold. He ate a good dinner but due to my nervous condition, I was unable to eat anything at all.

"Later, during the evening, Deacon drove me to the Fair Island

Bridge. He had a box which he wished to carry back towards the centre of the Fair Island Bridge. The time was about 1:00 am. The box was constructed of wood and had rope handles on each end. Deacon had installed a light of some type on top of the box to which he had attached a long coil of wire permitting him to flash this light from a considerable distance away. He held the box over the railing and attached it to the bridge with a delicate wire. He explained that the box would be attached in such a way that when the additional weight of the ransom money was placed therein, it would automatically fall from the bridge to the water where Deacon would recover it in some manner. . . .

"Deacon instructed me to walk now to my vantage point behind a Chinese pagoda which he had shown to me earlier in the day. This was the last time I have seen George Deacon to this day. My assignment was to act as a lookout and to inform Deacon by radio when Mr. Mackle appeared in the area in his Lincoln automobile. I was also instructed to inform him of any impending danger, such as a police vehicle or helicopter in the area. He was very fearful of helicopters.

"I remained at this position until I saw the car of Mr. Mackle leave the area. I made only one radio transmission to Deacon, and that was to inform him that I had observed Mr. Mackle's Lincoln approaching the area of the Fair Island Bridge. . . ."

In conversation with Ruth Eisemann-Schier, one question kept coming again and again: If Ruth was so concerned about Barbara's welfare why had she not made any attempt to tell anyone where Barbara could be found?

Thirty-six hours had elapsed between the time Ruth and Krist were separated and Barbara's rescue. Yet she had done nothing.

Asked why, Ruth burst into tears.

There was no answer.

ON JANUARY 13, 1969, a grand jury in DeKalb County, Georgia, the scene of the abduction, indicted both Krist and Ruth for kidnapping for ransom. Conviction there meant either life imprisonment or death in the electric chair. There was no other choice.

In Decatur, Georgia, the county seat for DeKalb County, Judge Hubert appointed two experienced criminal lawyers to represent Krist, and they pleaded him not guilty, claiming he was mentally deranged.

Judge Hubert appointed Dr. Merton Berger, a psychiatrist

considered one of Atlanta's finest. Dr. Berger found his subject fascinating and his report to the court reflected this

"In general I would say that the examination, including the mental status, showed no evidence of psychosis or any other severe or disabling mental illness.

"In my opinion this man has sufficient capacity to comprehend the nature of the legal proceedings in which he will be involved, and he is very well aware of his own position in relation to these proceedings.

"Further, he is able to advise his counsel rationally in the preparation and implementation of his own defence.

"Diagnostically he can be classified as having a sociopathic character disorder with no evidence of psychosis.

"Thank you for allowing me to evaluate this very interesting patient."

Dr. Berger submitted his report to Judge Hubert on March 22, and on the day prior to the scheduled sanity hearing, Krist's lawyers withdrew their insanity plea.

In Decatur, Georgia, on the grey and sunless Monday of May 19, 1969, Gary Steven Krist went on trial for his life

Unusually pale, his weight down from two hundred and thirty-five to one hundred and seventy-four pounds, his new beard trimmed neatly, Krist walked that morning through a tunnel from a jail across the street to the modernistic slab-and-marble courthouse of DeKalb County. He wore a dark colourless tie, a dark brown suit, and a pair of black shoes so new the soles were unscuffed. They squeaked.

His lawyers were James R. Venable and Mobley Childs. Venable, sixty-four, paunchy with thinning grey hair, pink-faced, blue-eyed, and apple-cheeked, was something of a legend in rural Georgia. Folksy, unpolished and countrified, quite deliberately so upon occasion, Venable survived as a courtroom relic of the old school of bombastic oratory.

His co-counsel, Mobley Childs, was a swarthy and urbane former insurance adjuster of thirty-five who had worked several years as an appellate attorney in the office of the Georgia attorney general. He was quick and he tried hard.

The trial of Krist moved swiftly. Judge H. O. Hubert, Jr., a plump small man of sixty-two years, wise in the ways of the law, ran his courtroom for six days without raising his voice unduly or touching his gavel.



Gary Steven Krist (right) arrives at the DeKalb County courthouse at Decatur, Georgia, to be arraigned for the kidnapping of Barbara Mackle.



Robert Mackle and Billy Vessels arrive at the courthouse in Decatur to testify in May 1969. Vessels helped Mackle find Fair Isle in the first ransom drop and personally delivered the \$500,000 in the second drop.

In a terse twelve-minute opening statement to the jury, District Attorney Bell declared: "The State will expect you to find a verdict of guilty without a recommendation of mercy."

When Bell called his seventy-fourth and last witness, Barbara Jane Mackle, wearing a blue knit dress with a white front, a trace of make-up, her black hair flouncing to her shoulders, walked quickly through the stilled courtroom.

Composed, speaking rapidly, smiling frequently, she testified for thirty-eight minutes.

Weeks later she would receive a letter from George P. Hardin, Emory University, a genealogist. As a close friend of Attorney James

Venable, he sat at the defence table. He would have to be considered a biased observer.

"Miss Mackle, your presence upon the stand was a fresh breeze blowing across a sick scene, because of your most forthright and unadorned narrative, and, pardon me, your natural charm.

"The defence thought you a wonderful witness so far as Krist-the-sick was concerned, since you conveyed no attitude of vengeance, nor did you dilate upon your most singular experience. I was delighted myself to see you unscarred, and even Krist hissed at me across the defence table just as you were nearly finished. 'She's got more guts than everybody in this room, you understand that, George?' 'More than I have, surely,' I hissed back.

"Also the equanimity of your family upon the stand, as well as that of Mr. Vessels, was remarkable, and was remarked upon by many of the audience, with admiration."

There was no defence. There was no attempt to argue insanity. Krist elected not to take the stand. In a two-hour impassioned discourse, Venable wrung his hands, called even upon the granite images of Confederate generals on nearby Stone Mountain to bear witness, and delivered such an orgy of summation that observers feared he would collapse. Literally, he wept.

By contrast, in a terse argument, Prosecutor Bell merely said he had proved his case "almost to a mathematical certainty". He stalked across the courtroom, flipped open the lid of the coffin and turned on the noisy pump. "Stick your head in there and listen," he exhorted the jurors. "The normal person, the usual person, would have gone crazy. 'Mercy?' The State says no. He deserves none. Punishment? There is but one."

Mobley Childs made one salient point. "How much easier it would have been to bury a dead body? I ask you that," he cried.

The shouting ceased finally, Judge Hubert charged the jurors, and the twelve men retired.

At 9:50 pm Monday, May 26, 1969, after four hours and five minutes of deliberation, the jury trooped back into the courtroom. The foreman remained standing. The eleven others took their seats. The verdict was written on a piece of paper. The foreman handed the paper to the district attorney. Bell read it silently.

Krist, standing, looked straight ahead. He put his right fingers to the left wrist to take his own pulse. It raced upward to a hundred and twenty, he would calculate later.

Then, reading still, the prosecutor's words rang loud and clear

"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty with a recommendation of mercy and life imprisonment."

Gary Steven Krist would live.

"Does the defendant wish to make a statement?" It was Judge Hubert.

Krist whispered into the ear of his lawyer "The defendant wishes to thank you." Venable replied.

In the end, Gary Krist owed his life to the family he wronged so terribly. The courtroom demeanour of the Mackle family—a father, mother, and daughter—influenced immensely the jurors' decision.

"There was no hatred, no animosity," the foreman said. "Neither the father, his wife, nor the young lady demanded retaliation

"And, of course, there was the swaying factor of no bodily harm. It seemed as if Krist did everything he could to keep from hurting her—except putting her in the box."

Some moments before Gary Krist was transferred that day from the DeKalb County Jail to the Georgia State Prison in Jackson, a deputy had him fill out a personal-history form.

The last line asked for the names of his relatives and closest friends. Krist answered in a single word: "None."

IN THE SAME COURTROOM three days later, Ruth Eisemann-Schier pleaded guilty. Her two court-appointed lawyers had informed District Attorney Bell that Ruth would plead guilty if the State of Georgia reduced the charge from kidnapping for ransom to the lesser charge of kidnapping.

Bell pondered and accepted. He did not look forward to a second trial and he knew that the defence would argue that Ruth had abandoned Krist prior to the collection of the ransom, and that she had cooperated fully when captured.

Judge Hubert sentenced her to seven years' imprisonment. She left the courtroom smiling.

GARY KRIST WAS PAROLED on May 14, 1979, after serving ten years of his life sentence. One of the conditions of his parole was that he return to his home state of Alaska and never go to Georgia again.

Ruth Eisemann-Schier was also paroled after serving approximately one and a half years. She was deported back to Honduras, and also banned from ever returning to Georgia.

EPILOGUE

I always feel a little awkward when people come up and ask, "Are you Barbara Mackle?" Most of the time they don't know quite what to say. And neither do I.

The one question everyone always asks is, "How are you *really*?"

Mother kids me about it. She says, "Now, Barbara. If you ever do anything odd or peculiar during the rest of your life, everyone is going to say, 'I knew it. I knew it all along.'" I guess Mother is right. Some people just don't want to believe I'm all right. Some people want to think I'm in shambles. And no matter what I say will not convince them, I guess.

But I'm fine. I really am.

I came out of it all right and I am certain that a lot of other persons could survive a lot easier than they think they could.

This is one of the reasons I decided—and the family decided—to write the book. I was very reluctant at first. We also realized, of course, that someone probably would write about it. By doing it ourselves, we could do it as honestly as possible. It is about as factual as we know how to make it.

Now I want to end it. I want to put it behind me. Once and for all, I want it to be over. For ever and ever.



GENE MILLER is associate editor for reporting with the *Miami Herald*. He has won two Pulitzer Prizes, both for reporting on individuals wrongfully convicted of murder. His one other book, *Invitation to a Lynching*, about two black men in Florida who were convicted for a murder they did not commit, led to a pardon for both men. Gene Miller's interests include opera, Brahms, photography and swimming.

BARBARA JANE MACKLE married her good friend Stewart Woodward shortly after her release from kidnapping. They live in Atlanta, Georgia, and have two children.

On Friday, 13 October 1972 an aircraft carrying a team of young Uruguayan rugby players, their friends and relatives, crashed high in the Andes. Some of the 45 passengers and crew were killed on impact; others were seriously injured. The survivors improvised aid for the wounded and planned how best to ration their meagre food supply. As the days passed, weakened by starvation and the cruel subzero temperatures, they had to face the inescapable truth: to survive, they must eat the flesh of their dead companions.

How these young men finally sent out “expeditionaries” to brave the Andean peaks and how, after appalling hardships, they achieved rescue is one of the epic adventures of our time. Piers Paul Read makes this deeply moving story read like a great novel, yet every word of it is true.

One

URUGUAY IS ONE OF the smallest countries on the South American continent, a buffer state between Brazil and Argentina, a secular and democratic society which for many decades was regarded as the most advanced and enlightened in South America.

Its economy, however, depended upon the pastoral and agricultural products which Uruguay exported to Europe, and in the course of the 1950s the value of these commodities went down and Uruguay went into a decline. There was unemployment and inflation, which in turn gave rise to social discontent.

As a result, there arose the first and most notable movement of urban guerrilla revolutionaries, the Tupamaros, and for a while things went their way. But then the government called upon the army, which ruthlessly uprooted these urban guerrillas from their middle-class homes, and the movement was suppressed; the Tupamaros were locked away.

Meanwhile back in the early 1950s, a group of Catholic parents, alarmed at the atheistic tendencies of the teachers in the state schools—and dissatisfied with the teaching of English by the Jesuits—had invited the Irish Provincial of the Christian Brothers to start a school in Montevideo. This invitation was accepted, and five Irish lay brothers came out to found the Stella Maris College.

Though they spoke only halting Spanish, these Irish brothers were well suited to the task they now sought to perform. Uruguay might be far from Ireland, but it too was a small country with an agricultural economy.

The families who lived in the pleasant modern houses built amid the pine trees of Carrasco—the most desirable suburb of Montevideo—were mostly large, and there were strong bonds between parents and children which persisted through adolescence into maturity. The respect which the boys felt for their parents was readily extended to their teachers.

Not even the Tupamaros troubled the Stella Maris College. Political idealism was more likely to flourish under the Jesuits, who trained the intellect, than under the Christian Brothers, whose aim

was to build the character of their boys—and one means to this end was rugby football.

When the Christian Brothers first came to Uruguay, rugby was hardly played there at all; indeed, they found themselves in a country where soccer was not just the national sport but a communal passion. They held to their contention, however, that soccer was a sport for the prima donna, whereas rugby football would teach the boys to work as a team. The parents expostulated but they acquiesced, and in time they even came to share the opinion of the Christian Brothers as to the merits of the game.

As for their sons, they played it with growing enthusiasm, and when the first generation had passed through the school, many of the graduates were unwilling to give it up. An old boys' group of alumni came into being, called the Old Christians' Club, and its chief activity was playing rugby on Sunday afternoons.

As the years passed, these games became popular—even fashionable. Each summer brought new members to the Old Christians' Club and ambition grew with success. The team made a trip to play teams in Argentina, and in 1971 they made up their minds to go further afield and play in Chile. To make this possible and not too expensive, the club chartered a plane from the Uruguayan Air Force to fly them from Montevideo to Santiago, and tickets for seats not required by the team were sold to their friends and supporters. The trip was a great success.

Towards the end of the next season, therefore, at around six on the morning of Thursday, 12 October 1972, passengers began to arrive at Carrasco airport for the second Old Christians' trip to Chile. In spite of the early hour and the bleary looks on their faces, the boys were dressed smartly in slacks and sports jackets, and they greeted one another with great excitement. The parents, too, all seemed to know one another. With fifty or sixty people talking and laughing together, it was almost as if someone had chosen the foyer of the airport to throw a party.

The boys milling around seemed a motley collection, ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-six, but they had more in common than met the eye. Most of them were Old Christians; most of those who were not had been to the Jesuit College of the Sacred Heart, and all were Roman Catholic. Besides the team and its supporters, there were their friends, and fellow students from the faculties in which many of them were now studying. Three of the boys were medical students, two of whom played in the team.

Not all the passengers who checked in at the desk of the Uruguayan Military Transport were Old Christians or even young men. There was a plump middle-aged woman, Señora Mariani, who had bought a ticket from the air force to go to her daughter's marriage in Chile. There were two middle-aged couples and a tall pleasant-looking girl of around twenty named Susana Parrado, who stood in the queue with her mother and her brother Nando.

When the flight was called, everyone went to the departure lounge and then passed through customs and passport control and out onto the tarmac. There they saw the shining white plane which was to take them to Chile. They climbed up an aluminium ladder to the door at the front of the fuselage, filed into the cabin, and filled up the seats, which were placed in pairs on either side of the aisle.

At 8:05 am the Fairchild, No. 571 of the Uruguayan Air Force, took off from Carrasco airport for Santiago in Chile, loaded with forty passengers, five crewmen, and their luggage. The pilot and commander of the plane was Colonel Ferradas. He had served in the air force for more than twenty years, had 5,117 hours of flying experience, and had flown over the treacherous *cordillera de los Andes* twenty-nine times. His co-pilot, Lieutenant Lagurara, was older than Ferradas but not as experienced.

The plane—the Fairchild F-227—was a twin-engined turboprop manufactured in the United States and bought by the Uruguayan Air Force only two years earlier. Ferradas himself had flown it down from Maryland. Since it had only logged 792 hours, by aeronautical standards it was as good as new; if there was any doubt in the pilots' minds, it did not concern the qualities of the plane but rather the notoriously treacherous currents of air in the Andes. Only twelve or thirteen weeks before, a four-engined cargo plane with a crew of six had disappeared in the mountains.

The flight plan filed by Lagurara was to take the Fairchild direct from Montevideo to Santiago by way of Buenos Aires and Mendoza, a distance of around nine hundred miles. The Fairchild cruised at about two hundred and forty knots; it would therefore take them approximately four hours, the last half hour of which would be over the Andes. These, though less than a hundred miles wide, rise to an average height of thirteen thousand feet, with peaks as high as twenty thousand feet. The danger, however, was not just that a plane might crash into a mountain. The weather in the Andes was subject to every kind of treachery. From the east, hot currents of air rose to meet the icy atmosphere at the snow line, while at the same

time cyclonic winds blew in from the west and grappled with the hot and cold currents from the other side. If a plane was caught in such turbulence, it could be blown around like a leaf in a gutter.

THERE WAS NO OVERT SIGN of anxiety in the passenger compartment. The boys talked, laughed, read comics and played cards. Marcelo Pérez, the team's captain, discussed rugby with other players; Susana Parrado sat next to her mother, who handed out sweets to the boys around her. Behind them sat Nando Parrado with his greatest friend, Panchito Abal.

These two boys were inseparable. They were both the sons of businessmen and both worked in their fathers' firms. On the surface it was an unequal friendship: Abal, handsome, charming and rich—Parrado, awkward, shy and, though pleasant-looking, not particularly attractive. He lacked Abal's glamour and easy charm; moreover, he was neither more nor less than what he seemed to be. Abal, on the other hand, gave the impression that his gaiety concealed a profound and mysterious melancholy which only added to his allure. But Parrado had one advantage over Abal for which the latter would willingly have exchanged all the others: he came from a happy, united family. Abal's parents were divorced, and the divorce had deeply injured him. His melancholy was not just an affectation.

The plane flew on over the endless pampas of Argentina. Slowly the ground beneath them changed in appearance from a vast paving of green to the more arid ground at the foothills of the Sierras. Then suddenly they saw the Andes rising before them, a dramatic and apparently impassable wall with snow-clad peaks like the teeth of a giant saw. As they steeled themselves for the awesome sight of some of the highest mountains in the world, the steward, Ramírez, suddenly came out of the pilot's cabin and announced over a loudspeaker that weather conditions had made it impossible to cross the cordillera. They were going to land in Mendoza and wait until the weather improved.

A groan of disappointment went up from the boys. As it was, they only had five days to spend in Chile and they did not want to waste one of them in Argentina. However, since there was no way round the Andes there was nothing to be done, so they fastened their seat belts and sat tight as the Fairchild landed at Mendoza airport. The boys followed the crew out of the plane. It was lunchtime and they were hungry. They had either had an early breakfast or no breakfast

at all, and no food to speak of was carried on the Fairchild. A group of the younger ones made straight for a nearby restaurant.

Others went off in search of hotels in town. By the next morning no word had come from the crew that they should go to the airport, so they went wandering around the streets of Mendoza. Some of the boys bought chocolate, nougat, and cartridges of butane gas to refill their lighters. Nando Parrado bought a pair of little red shoes for his older sister's baby, and his mother bought small bottles of rum and liqueurs for friends in Chile.

Two of the medical students, Roberto Canessa and Gustavo Zerbino, went to a pavement café on a tree-lined boulevard. There they ordered breakfast and a short time later, as they sat drinking their coffee, they saw the two pilots walking towards them.

"Hey!" they shouted to Colonel Ferradas. "Can we leave now?"

"Not yet," said Ferradas.

"Are you cowards or what?" asked Canessa, who was nicknamed Muscles because of his stubborn character.

Ferradas looked momentarily annoyed. "Do you want your parents to read in the papers that forty-five Uruguayans are lost in the cordillera?" he asked.

"No," said Zerbino. "We want them to read, 'Forty-five Uruguayans cross the cordillera at all costs'."

Ferradas and Lagurara laughed and walked on. They were placed in an awkward situation, not so much by the boys' taunts as by the dilemma they faced. The meteorological reports were that the weather was improving over the Andes. There was an excellent chance that by early afternoon the pass at Planchon would be clear. It would mean crossing the Andes at a time of day that was normally considered hazardous, but they were confident that they could fly above the turbulence. They therefore passed the word that their passengers should report to the airport at one o'clock.

THE CO-PILOT, LAGURARA, was at the controls of the Fairchild as it took off from Mendoza airport at eighteen minutes past two, local time. He set course for the Planchon Pass. The plane climbed to eighteen thousand feet and flew with a tail wind of between twenty and sixty knots.

The land beneath them was sparse and arid, marked by riverbeds and salt lakes which bore the traces of bulldozers. To the right rose the cordillera, a curtain of barren rock reaching towards the sky. If the plain below was mostly infertile, these mountains were a desert.



Last picture before the fatal flight. This photograph was taken on 13 October 1972 at Mendoza airport, Argentina, where the Uruguayan Air Force Fairchild had touched down because of bad weather. Minutes after this picture was taken, the aircraft was airborne again, bound for disaster.

The fate of its crew and passengers was as follows:

- 1 Pancho Delgado, 24, survived.
- 2 Numa Turcatti, 24, died.
- 3 Eduardo Strauch, 25, survived.
- 4 Daniel Fernández, 26, survived.
- 5 Coche Inciarte, 24, survived.
- 6 Rafael Echavarren, 22, died of injuries.
- 7 Felipe Maquirraín, 22, killed in crash.
- 8 Pedro Algorta, 21, survived.
- 9 Fito Strauch, 24, survived.



10 Antonio Vizintín, 19, survived.



11 Jorge Hounie, 20, killed in crash.



12 Gustavo Zerbinio, 24, survived.



13 Daniel Maspons, 20, killed in avalanche.

14 Carlos Valeta, 18, fell out of plane, died in snow.

15 Aloaro Mangino, 19, survived.

16 Enrique Platero, 22, killed in avalanche.

17 Diego Storm, 20, killed in avalanche.

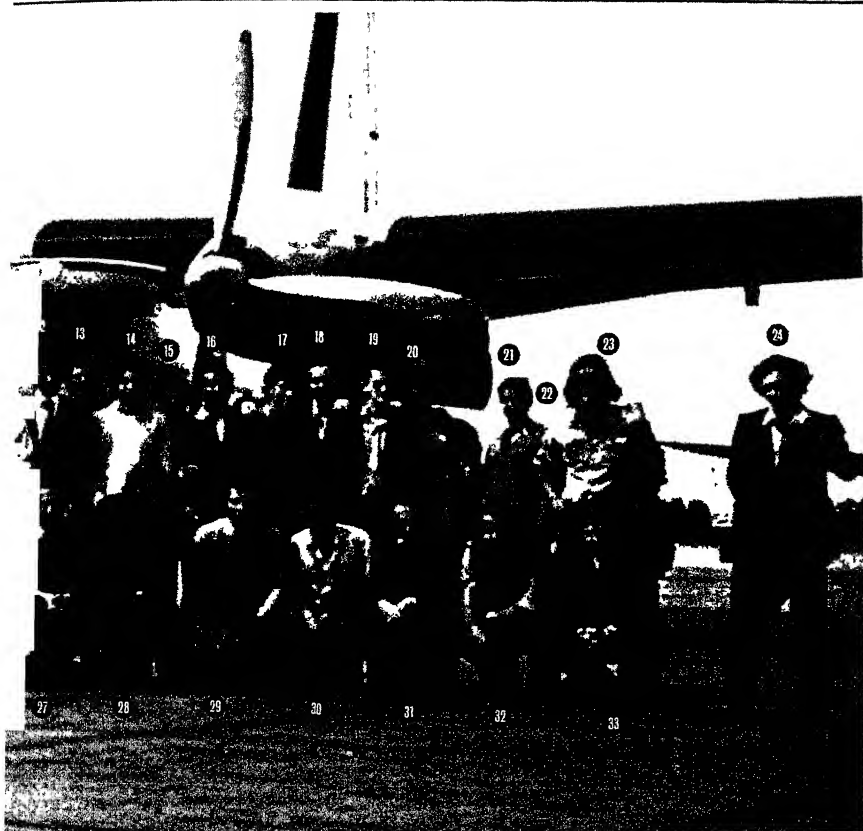
18 Gustavo Nicolich, 20, killed in avalanche.

19 Roy Harley, 20, survived.

20 Carlitos Pérez, 18, survived.

21 Moncho Sabella, 21, survived.

22 Bobby Francois, 20, survived.



- 23 Nando Parrado, 22, survived.
- 24 Roberto Canessa, 19, survived.
- 25 Juan Menéndez, 22, killed in avalanche.
- 26 Daniel Shaw, 24, killed in crash.
- 27 Julio Martínez-Lamas, 24, died of injuries.
- 28 Guido Magri, 23, killed in crash.
- 29 Panchito Abal, 21, died of injuries.
- 30 Fernando Vazquez, 20, killed in crash.
- 31 Gastón Costemalle, 23, killed in crash.
- 32 Marcelo Pérez, 25, killed in avalanche.
- 33 Arturo Nogueira, 21, died of injuries.
- 34 Javier Methol, 36, survived.
- 35 Liliana Methol, 34, killed in avalanche.
- 36 Eugenia Parrado, 50, killed in crash.
- 37 Susana Parrado, 20, died of injuries.
- 38 Dr. Francisco Nicola, 40, killed in crash.
- 39 Esther Nicola, 40, killed in crash.
- 40 Colonel Julio Ferradas (pilot), 39, killed in crash.
- 41 Lieut.-Colonel Dante Lagurara (co-pilot), 41, died of injuries.
- 42 Lieut. Ramon Martínez (navigator), 30, killed in crash.
- 43 Carlos Roque (mechanic), 24, killed in avalanche.
- 44 Ovidio Ramírez (steward), 26, killed in crash.
- 45 Not shown: Graziela Mariani, 42, died of injuries.

The brown, grey and yellow rock was untouched by even the smallest trace of vegetation. Nothing broke the monotonous ascent of these mountains except the snow. Above thirteen thousand feet it was perpetual, but at this time of year it lay at much lower altitudes, softening the lines of the mountains and piling up in the valleys to a depth of more than a hundred feet.

Still flying at eighteen thousand feet, the plane now turned to fly over the cordillera. Lagurara estimated that they would reach Planchon—the point in the middle of the mountains where he passed from air traffic control in Mendoza to that in Santiago—at 15:21 hours. As he flew into the mountains, however, a blanket of cloud obscured his vision of the ground beneath. This was no cause for concern. Visibility above the clouds was good, and with the ground of the high cordillera covered with snow, there would, in any case, have been nothing by which they could have identified Planchon.

At 15:21 Lagurara radioed air traffic control in Santiago to say that he was over the pass of Planchon and expected to reach Curicó—a small town in Chile on the western side of the Andes—at 15:32. Then, only three minutes later, the Fairchild once again made contact with Santiago and reported “checking Curicó and heading towards Maipu”. The plane turned at right angles to its previous course and headed north. The control tower in Santiago, accepting Lagurara at his word, authorized him to bring the plane down to ten thousand feet as he came towards the airport. In fact he had miscalculated his position and flown north towards Santiago when he was still in the middle of the mountains. At 15:30 Santiago checked that Lagurara had already brought the plane down three thousand feet. At this altitude it entered a cloud and began to jump and shake in the different currents of air. Lagurara switched on the sign in the passenger cabin which ordered passengers to fasten their safety belts and to stop smoking.

Inside the passenger compartment there was a holiday atmosphere. Several of the boys were walking up and down the aisle, peering out of the small windows to try and catch a glimpse of the mountains through a gap in the clouds, frightening one another with the thought that it was Friday the thirteenth, and teasing Señora Parrado for taking a travelling rug to Chile in the spring. They were all in high spirits; they had their rugby ball with them, and some were throwing it up and down the passenger cabin over their heads.

The steward had been playing cards in the galley with the

navigator, Martinez. Now he came into the passenger cabin and told everyone to sit down.

"There's bad weather ahead," he said. "The plane's going to dance a little, but don't worry. We're in touch with Santiago. We'll be landing soon."

The plane began to lurch in a manner which alarmed many of the passengers. There were one or two practical jokes to hide this nervousness. One of the boys took hold of the microphone at the back of the plane and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, please put on your parachutes. We are about to land in the cordillera."

His audience was not amused, because just at that moment the plane hit an air pocket and plummeted several hundred feet. Eugenia Parrado looked up from her book. There was nothing to be seen from the window but the white cloud. She turned the other way and took hold of Susana's hand. Behind them Nando Parrado and Panchito Abal were engrossed in conversation. Parrado had not even fastened his seat belt, nor did he do so when the plane hit a second air pocket and sank like a stone for a further few hundred feet. A cry of "Olé, olé, olé!" went up from the boys in the cabin—those, that is, who could not see out of a window, for the second fall had brought the plane out of the clouds, and the view which opened up beneath them was of the rocky edge of a snow-covered mountain no more than ten feet from the tip of the wing.

"Is it normal to fly so close?" one boy asked another.

"I don't think so," his companion replied.

Several passengers started to pray. Others braced themselves against the seats in front of them. There was a roar of the engines and the plane vibrated as the Fairchild tried to climb again; it rose a little but then there came a deafening crash as the right wing hit the side of the mountain. Immediately it broke off, somersaulted over the fuselage and cut off the tail. Out into the icy air fell the steward and the navigator, followed by three of the boys still strapped to their seats. A moment later the left wing broke away and a blade of the propeller ripped into the fuselage before falling to the ground.

Inside what remained of the fuselage there were screams of terror and cries for help. Without either wings or tail, the plane hurtled towards the jagged mountain, but instead of being smashed to pieces it landed on its belly in a steep valley and slid like a toboggan on the sloping surface of deep snow.

The speed at which it hit the ground was around two hundred knots, yet it did not disintegrate. Two more boys were sucked out of

the back of the plane; the rest remained in the fuselage as it careered down the mountain. While the freezing air of the Andes rushed into the decompressed cabin and those who still had their wits about them waited for the impact of the fuselage against rock, the force of deceleration caused the seats to break loose from their mountings and move forward, crushing the bodies of those caught between them and smashing the partition which separated the passenger cabin from the forward luggage area. Some of the boys tried to undo their safety belts and stand up in the aisle, but only Gustavo Zerbino succeeded. He stood with his feet planted firmly on the floor and his hands pressed against the ceiling, shouting, "Jesus, little Jesus, help us, help us!"

Another of the boys, Carlitos Páez, was saying a Hail Mary. As he mouthed the last words of this prayer, the plane came to a stop. There was a moment of stillness. Then, slowly, from all over the tangled mess within the passenger cabin came the sounds of life—groans and prayers and cries for help.

Boys began to emerge from the wreckage. First came Gustavo Zerbino, then the team captain, Marcelo Pérez. Pérez had a bruised face and a pain in his side, but as captain of the team he immediately took it upon himself to organize the rescue of those trapped in the wreckage, while the medical students, Canessa and Zerbino, did what they could for the injured.

Some of the younger boys, smelling petrol fumes and fearing that the plane might catch fire, jumped out of the gaping hole at the back. They found themselves up to their thighs in snow.

The scene was one of the utmost desolation. All around them was snow and beyond, on three sides, the sheer grey walls of the mountains. The plane had come to a halt on a slight tilt, facing down the valley where the mountains were much further away and now partly obscured by grey clouds. It was bitterly cold, and many of the boys were in their shirtsleeves. Some wore blazers, but none was dressed for sub-zero temperatures, and few suitcases could be seen which might provide extra clothes.

As they looked back up the mountain for their lost luggage, they saw a figure staggering down the mountainside. As it drew nearer, the boys recognized one of their friends, Carlos Valeta, and shouted to him, calling him to come in their direction. Valeta seemed unable to see or hear them. At each step he sank up to his thighs in the snow, and only the steepness of the hill enabled him to make any progress at all. Two boys tried to go out to meet him, but it was impossible to



This photograph, taken only minutes before the crash, was on a film recovered from the wreckage. Left to right: Sabella, Francois, Echavarren, Páez, Costemalle, Mangino, Fito Strauch, Nicolich, Harley, Inciarte, Martínez-Lamas.

walk uphill in the snow: they were trapped and could only watch helplessly as Valeta stumbled past. For a moment it seemed as if he might have heard them and be changing direction towards the plane, but then he slipped and his body slithered helplessly down the side of the mountain until he finally disappeared.

Inside the plane, the handful of boys who were able tried to prise away the seats which trapped so many of the wounded. In the thin air of the mountains it took double the effort, and many of those who had suffered only superficial injuries were still in a state of shock.

Even when the wounded were pulled clear, there was little that anyone could do. The training of the two "doctors", Canessa and Zerbino (the third medical student, Diego Storm, was in a state of shock), was pitifully inadequate. Of Zerbino's first year at medical school, six months had been dedicated to compulsory classes in psychology and sociology. Canessa had done two years, but even so

this was only a quarter of the total course. All the same, both were aware of the special responsibility which their training conferred upon them.

Canessa knelt down to examine the body of a woman. It was Eugenia Parrado, and she was dead. Beside her lay Susana Parrado, who was alive but seriously injured. Blood poured out of a gash in her forehead. Canessa wiped away the blood and then laid her down on the small part of the floor that was not cluttered with seats.

Near her was Abal. He too was severely injured, with an open wound in his scalp. He was semiconscious and, as Canessa knelt to treat him as best he could, Abal took hold of his hand, saying, "Please don't leave me." There were so many others crying for help that Canessa could not stay with him. He moved on to Parrado, who had been thrown out of his seat and lay senseless at the front of the plane. His face was covered with blood and Canessa knelt and felt for a pulse; a faint beating of the heart registered on his fingertips. Parrado was still alive, but it seemed impossible that he could live for long, and since nothing could be done to help him he was given up for dead.

Besides Eugenia Parrado, four other passengers in the fuselage had been killed. For the time being their bodies were left where they were, and the two medical students returned to the living. They made bandages of the antimacassars from the backs of the seats, but for many of the injuries these were quite inadequate. One boy, Rafael Echavarren, had had the calf of his right leg torn off and twisted round to cover the shin. The bone was entirely exposed. Zerbino took hold of the bleeding muscle, pulled it round to its proper place and then bound up his leg with a white shirt.

Another boy—Enrique Platero—came up to Zerbino with a steel tube sticking into his stomach. Zerbino was appalled, but he remembered that a good doctor always instils confidence into his patient. He therefore said, with as much conviction as he could, "Well, Enrique, you look all right."

Platero pointed to the piece of steel. "And what about this?"

"Don't worry about that," said Zerbino. "You're perfectly strong, so come and give me a hand with these seats."

Platero seemed to accept this. He turned towards the seats and, as he did so, Zerbino grabbed hold of the tube, put his knee against Platero's body and pulled. The piece of steel came out.

Before Platero had time to complain, Zerbino said to him, "Now look here, Enrique, you may think you're in a bad way, but there are

plenty of others much worse off than you are, so don't be a coward. and just come and help. Tie that up with a shirt, and I'll see to it later."

Without complaint Platero did as Zerbino had told him.

Many of the boys had been injured in the legs as the seats buckled up and pressed together. One had his leg broken in three different places, was severely wounded in the chest and was now unconscious. It was those who were conscious who suffered—Panchito Abal, Susana Parrado and, worst of all, a middle-aged lady whom none of them knew, Señora Mariani. She was trapped by her two broken legs under a pile of seats, and the boys were unable to extricate her. She screamed and begged for help, but it was beyond their strength to lift the seats which held her down.

The face of Liliana Methol, the fifth woman in the plane, was badly bruised and covered with blood, but all her injuries were superficial. Her husband, Javier, was unhurt, but he had previously suffered from tuberculosis and as a result altitude sickness had overwhelmed him. Though he made feeble attempts to help the wounded, he felt such dizziness and nausea that he was barely able to move. Others, though not afflicted with the same symptoms, suffered from the shock of the accident. One boy, Pedro Algorta, had total amnesia. He was physically well enough to work hard at moving the seats, but he had no idea where he was or what he was doing.

THE PLANE HAD CRASHED at about half past three in the afternoon, and at about four o'clock snow began to fall, obliterating the view of the mountains. In spite of the snow, Marcelo Pérez directed that the wounded should be carried out so that those who were fit could clear the tangled seats from the floor of the Fairchild. This was intended as a temporary measure: they all felt sure that by now the plane would have been reported missing and help would be on the way.

The entrance to the pilots' cabin was blocked by the piled-up wall of seats, but sounds of life could be heard from the other side, so one of the calmer boys, Moncho Sabella, decided to try to reach the pilots from the outside.

It was almost impossible to walk on the snow, but he discovered that he could use seat cushions as stepping-stones to the front of the plane. The nose had been crushed by the descent, but it was not difficult to climb up and look into the cockpit through the door to the front luggage compartment.

There he discovered that Ferradas and Lagurara were trapped in

their seats. Ferradas was dead, but Lagurara was alive and conscious and, seeing Sabella beside him, begged him to help. There was little Sabella could do. He could not move Lagurara's body, but in answer to his plea for water he crammed some snow into a handkerchief and held it to his mouth.

Later, Canessa and Zerbino retraced Sabella's steps to the pilots' cabin. They tried to push the instrument panel off Lagurara's chest, but it was impossible to move it. His seat was also fixed immovably in position. As they struggled futilely to free him, Lagurara said over and over again, "We passed Curicó, we passed Curicó." Then, seeing that nothing could be done, he asked the two boys to fetch the revolver which he kept in his bag.

The bag was nowhere to be seen, nor would Canessa and Zerbino have given him the gun if they had found it because, as Catholics, they could not condone suicide. They asked him instead if they could use the radio to bring help and set the dial as Lagurara instructed, but the transmitter was dead.

Lagurara was bleeding through the nose, and Canessa knew that he would not live for long. The two "doctors" made their way back over the seat cushions to the rear of the plane. The daylight was fading. By six it was almost dark and the temperature had sunk far below freezing. It was clear that rescue would not come that day, and so the wounded were brought back into the plane and the thirty-two survivors prepared for the night.

THERE WAS LITTLE SPACE. The break at the back of the fuselage was jagged, leaving seven windows on the left-hand side of the plane but only four on the right. The distance from the pilots' cabin to the gaping hole at the rear measured only twenty feet, and most of this space was taken up by the knotted tangle of seats. The only floor space they had been able to clear before dark was by the entrance, and it was here that they laid the most seriously wounded, including Susana and Nando Parrado and Panchito Abal. In this position they were able to lie almost horizontally, but they had little protection against the snow and the bitter wind that blew in from the darkness. Marcelo Pérez, with the help of a hefty wing forward named Roy Harley, had done his best to build a barrier against the cold with anything that came to hand—especially the seats and suitcases—but the wind was strong and their wall kept falling down.

Pérez, Harley and a group of uninjured boys remained in a huddle near the wounded by the entrance, doing what they could to keep

up their makeshift barrier. The rest of the survivors slept where they could among the seats and bodies. As many as possible, including Liliana Methol, moved into the confined space of the luggage compartment, which lay between the passenger cabin and the cockpit. It was cramped and uncomfortable but by far the warmest place in the plane. Some of the boys were still dressed in short-sleeved shirts, and Canessa had the first of his ingenious ideas. He found that the upholstery, which was of brushed nylon, was only held to the seats by zippers. It was quite simple to remove the coverings and, once removed, these made small blankets. They were pitifully inadequate protection against subzero temperatures, but they were better than nothing.

Worse than the cold that night was the atmosphere of hysteria in the cramped cabin of the Fairchild. All the time there came from the dark the moans, screams and delirious raving of the wounded. They could still hear cries and groans from Lagurara in the pilots' cabin. "We passed Curicó," he would say, "we passed Curicó." He would moan for water and beg for his gun.

Inside the cabin itself the worst cries came from Señora Mariani, still trapped by her broken legs beneath the seats. At one time an attempt was made to free her, but it was impossible, and she swore that if they moved her she would die. Two boys, Rafael Echavarren and Moncho Sabella, took hold of her hands in an attempt to comfort her, but the shrieks continued.

One boy, Eduardo Strauch, tried to climb over the seats to find a warmer place to sleep. He stood on the only surviving member of the crew (besides Lagurara)—Carlos Roque, the mechanic. "Show me your papers!" Roque shouted. "Identify yourself."

In another part of the plane a second figure, Pancho Delgado, stood up and made for the door. "I'm just going to the shops to get some Coca-Cola," he announced to his friends.

"Then get me some mineral water while you're there," replied Carlitos Pérez.

In spite of the intense discomfort, some of the boys managed to drift off into sleep, but it was a long night. The boys by the entrance suffered most—their limbs numb from the snowflakes which blew over their bodies. The uninjured could at least rub their feet and fingers to keep up the circulation of their blood. It was the plight of the two Parrados and Panchito Abal that was most terrible. They were unable to warm themselves and, though the injuries they had sustained were so severe, only Nando was unconscious and oblivious

of his agony. Abal begged for help which no one could give him, and Susana cried continuously for her dead mother. Then her mind wandered and she sang a nursery rhyme.

In the course of the night the third medical student, Diego Storm, decided that, though Parrado was unconscious, his injuries seemed more superficial than those of the two others. He therefore pulled Parrado's body over among the group of his friends, and together they combined to keep it warm. It seemed senseless to do this for the other two.

THE SUN ROSE ON THE MORNING OF Saturday, 14 October, to find the hulk of the Fairchild half buried in snow. It lay at about eleven thousand five hundred feet, between the Tinguiririca volcano in Chile and the Cerro Sosneado in Argentina. There were clouds in the sky but the snow had stopped.

Inside the plane Canessa and Zerbino began, once again, to examine the wounded passengers. Señora Mariani was still breathing, but she died later in the morning. Panchito Abal lay motionless over the body of Susana Parrado, and it was quite evident that he was dead. The doctors discovered that two others had died in the night. For a time they thought that Susana Parrado must also be dead, for she was quiet, but when they removed the body of Abal they saw that she was still alive. Her feet had gone purple from the cold, and she complained to the mother who was no longer there. "Mama, Mama," she cried, "my feet are hurting. Oh, please, Mama, can't we go home?"

There was little that Canessa could do for Susana. He massaged her frostbitten feet to try and bring back the circulation. He felt sure that her internal organs were badly damaged, but he had neither the knowledge nor the facilities to do anything about it. Indeed, there was little he could do for any of them. There were no drugs on the plane beyond some Librium and Valium found in a handbag, and there was nothing in the wreckage which seemed suitable to be used as splints for broken limbs. Canessa could only tell those with broken arms or legs to lay them on the snow to help bring down the swelling.

Zerbino examined the hole in Platero's stomach from which he had pulled the steel tube the day before. There was a protruding piece of gristle which so far as he knew could be part of the intestine. Zerbino tied it up with some thread, disinfected it with eau de cologne, and then told Platero to push it back into his stomach and bind up the wound once again. This Platero did without complaint.

The two doctors were not without their nurse Lilita Methol, though her face was still purple from the bruises she had received in the crash, did what she could to help and encourage them. She was a small, dark woman of thirty-five whose life until then had been devoted to her husband Javier and four children; it was as a celebration of their twelfth wedding anniversary that Javier had brought her on the trip to Chile. Now she was a natural source of comfort for the younger boys. She was patient and kind, speaking soft words to make their spirits strong.

The attention of the doctors and their nurse was drawn to one of the youngest members of the first fifteen, Antonio Vizintín, called Tintin, who had seemed to be suffering only from concussion. Now, blood was seen dripping from the sleeve of his coat. He insisted that he felt no pain, but when the two doctors cut away the sleeve more blood gushed from a severed vein. They at once made a tourniquet to stop the flow and then bandaged the wound as best they could.

Their final tour of duty was to the pilots' cabin. The frost had frozen the surface of the snow, and they were able to take some steps away from the plane. Since early morning no sound had come from Lagurara, and they found, as they had suspected, that he was dead.

Roque, the mechanic, was now the only surviving crew member. Marcelo Pérez asked him if there were any emergency supplies or signal flares in the plane. Roque said no. Marcelo then asked him if the radio could be made to work, and Roque replied that it would need the power of the plane's batteries, which had been stored in the missing tail.

There seemed nothing to be done, but Marcelo was so confident they would soon be rescued that he was not unduly concerned. It was agreed, all the same, that what food they had should be rationed, and Marcelo made an inventory of everything edible that had been salvaged from the cabin or from those pieces of luggage which had not been lost with the tail. There were three bottles of wine, a bottle of whisky, a bottle of crème de menthe, a bottle of cherry brandy, and a further hip flask of whisky.

For solid food they had eight bars of chocolate, five bars of nougat, some caramels, some dates and dried plums, a packet of salted biscuits, two tins of mussels, one tin of salted almonds, and a small jar each of peach, apple and blackberry jam. This was not a lot of food for twenty-eight people, and since they did not know how many days they would have to wait before being rescued, it was decided to make it last as long as possible. For lunch that day Marcelo gave each of

The pilots died in the cockpit. The remains of the fuselage became the survivors' only refuge as the days lengthened into weeks



them a square of chocolate and the cap from a deodorant can filled with wine.

That afternoon they heard an aeroplane flying overhead but saw nothing because of the clouds. Again night came upon them more quickly than expected, but this time they were better prepared. They had cleared more space in the plane, they had built a better wall against the wind and snow, and there were fewer of them.

ON THE MORNING OF SUNDAY, 15 OCTOBER, those who came out of the plane saw that for the first time since they had crashed the sky was clear. It was a deep blue, and in spite of their circumstances the



Trapped in the mountains, with no signs of rescue, survivors can still manage a smile as a companion takes a photograph. Left to right: Delgado, Inciarte, Fernández, Eduardo Strauch, Sabella and Mangino.

survivors were impressed by the grandeur of their silent valley. All around them were mountains, dazzling now in the bright light of the early morning. Distances were deceptive. In the thin air, the peaks seemed close at hand.

The clear skies gave them reason to believe that they would be rescued that day, or at least be spotted from the air. In the meantime their most pressing need was for water. The snow was difficult to melt in sufficient quantity to quench their thirst, and they found that it was better to cram it into a bottle and shake the bottle until the snow melted. This, however, took not only time but energy, and provided barely enough for the needs of a single person.

It was Adolfo Strauch—or Fito, as he was called—who invented a water-making device. He and Eduardo Strauch were double cousins (their fathers being brothers, their mothers sisters). The Strauch family had come to Uruguay from Germany in the nineteenth century and both boys were blond and good-looking, with recognizably German features. In fact, Eduardo was called “the German” by the others.

In the crash both Fito and Eduardo had been knocked unconscious. When they regained consciousness they were in such a state of shock that they did not realize where they were. Fito had tried to leave the plane immediately, and during the first night it was Eduardo who had stepped on Roque. They had been restrained by another cousin who had survived, Daniel Fernández, the son of their fathers’ sister.

By Sunday, Fito had recovered sufficiently to apply his mind to converting snow into water. The sun shone brightly, melting the brittle crust on the surface of the snow that had formed the night before. It occurred to Fito that they might harness this solar heat to make water. He looked around for something to hold the snow, and his eye fell upon a rectangle of aluminium which came from inside the back of a smashed seat. He bent up the sides so that it formed a shallow bowl, and twisted one corner to make a spout. He then covered it thinly with snow and tilted the whole apparatus to face the sun. In a short time a steady trickle of water poured into the bottle that Fito held ready beneath it.

Since every seat contained such a rectangle of aluminium, there were soon several water-makers at work. Melting snow required a minimum of physical energy, so this became the regular task of those who were not well enough to do anything more strenuous. Their only difficulty was in finding uncontaminated snow, for around the plane it was polluted by oil from the plane and by urine. It was therefore decided that two areas only should be used as lavatories—one just by the entrance and the other beneath the front wheel of the plane underneath the pilots’ cabin.

At midday Marcelo gave out the ration of food, a deodorant cap filled with wine and a taste of jam. A square of chocolate would be kept for the evening meal. There were some complaints that there should have been a little bit more for their Sunday lunch, but the majority agreed that it was better to be careful.

There was now one more to share the rations. Nando Parrado, once left for dead, had regained consciousness that day, and when

the blood was washed from his face it was found that his skull was intact. His first thought was for his mother and sister.

"Your mother died at once in the crash," Canessa told him. "Her body is out in the snow. But don't think of that. You must help Susana. Rub her feet and help her to eat and drink."

Susana's condition had deteriorated. Her face was still covered with bruises and, worse still, her feet were now black from that first night. She seemed unaware of where she was, and still cried for her mother. Nando devoted himself to her care. He massaged her frostbitten feet, and when Susana mumbled that she was thirsty, Nando held to her lips the mixture of snow and crème de menthe and the little pieces of chocolate which Marcelo had set aside for her.

Shortly after noon the boys saw a plane flying directly overhead, high above the mountains. All those who were out in the snow jumped up, waved, shouted and flashed pieces of metal up into the sky. Many cried with joy.

At mid-afternoon a turboprop flew over them from east to west, this time at a much lower altitude, and soon after that another like it flew over them from north to south. Again the survivors waved and shouted, but the plane continued on its course and disappeared over the mountains.

There now arose a division among the boys as to whether they had been seen or not. Then, at half past four, they all heard the engines of an aeroplane much nearer to them than ever before, and there appeared from behind the mountains a small biplane following a course which would pass directly over them. They waved frantically and tried to reflect the sun up into the eyes of the pilot with their small pieces of metal, and to their intense joy the biplane, as it flew over them, dipped its wings as if signalling that they had been seen.

Nothing now could stop the boys believing what they wanted so much to believe, and while some simply sat in the snow waiting for the arrival of helicopters, Canessa opened a bottle of wine and, with the wounded who were in his charge, gulped it down to celebrate their salvation.

Shortly afterwards it began to grow dark. The sun went behind the mountains and the bitter cold returned. No sound broke the silence. It was clear that the twenty-seven survivors would not be rescued that night.

For a long time that Sunday night no one slept. Confined in a space measuring twenty feet by eight, they could fit in only by lying sandwiched together in couples, end to end. The plane itself was

tilted on its axis. Those who lay full length on the floor were at an angle of about thirty degrees. Those opposite had only their legs on the floor, resting their backs against the wall of the cabin. The space was so cramped that for one to move his position all had to do the same, and any movement whatsoever caused agony to those with broken legs. Every now and then one of their number would sleepwalk. "I'm off to get some Coca-Cola!" he would shout, and then start to climb over the bodies which lay between him and the door. It was because of this that the idea entered Canessa's inventive mind of building some kind of hammock in which the most severely injured could sleep at night, away from their companions.

Next morning, with a boy called Daniel Maspons, he began to look around for suitable materials. They discovered a large number of nylon straps and poles stowed in the luggage area, and created a hammock large enough for two of the wounded to sleep in undisturbed. They also found that the door which had stood between the passenger compartment and the luggage area could be suspended in the same way, and that a seat could be slung up to make a bunk on which two others could sleep.

That Monday morning, the fourth day, some of the most seriously injured—such as Vizintín, whom Canessa had thought might die from loss of blood—had started to show signs of recovery in spite of the rudimentary medical attention. Many were still in considerable pain, but much of the swelling had gone down and open wounds had started to heal.

Parrado's recovery was remarkably rapid despite the strain of nursing Susana. And as he regained his strength there grew within him a determination to escape. While most of his companions only thought of being rescued, Parrado considered the active option of somehow getting back to civilization, and he confided this determination to Carlitos Pérez, who also wanted to leave.

"Impossible," said Carlitos. "You'd starve to death. You can't climb mountains on a little piece of chocolate and a sip of wine."

"Then I'll cut meat from one of the pilots," said Parrado. "After all, they got us into this mess."

Carlitos was not shocked by this because he did not take it seriously. He was, however, among those who were increasingly concerned at the length of time it was taking to rescue them. Because the thought that they could not be seen from the air, or that they had been given up for lost, was so terrible, few of the survivors would permit it to enter their minds. They evolved the theory that they had

been seen but were too high in the cordillera to be rescued by helicopter, so an expedition was coming by land. Marcelo believed this, and so did Pancho Delgado, a law student who hobbled around the plane on his one good leg, cheerfully insisting that God would not forsake them in their predicament.

None of the boys had any real idea of where they were. They had found charts in the pilots' cabin which they studied for hour after hour, huddled out of the wind in the dark cabin. None of them knew how to read aeronautical charts, but they remembered that the co-pilot had said repeatedly that they had passed Curicó, and it was plain from the map that Curicó was well into Chile on the western side of the Andes. Thus they must be somewhere in the foothills. The needle on the altimeter pointed to seven thousand feet. To the west, Chilean villages could not be very far away.

Any path to the west, however, was blocked by the gigantic mountains, and the valley in which they were trapped led to the east—back, they thought, into the middle of the cordillera. They were convinced that if only they could climb to the top of the mountains to the west, they would be met by a view of green valleys and Chilean farmhouses.

They were able to walk away from the plane only until nine or so in the morning. After that, if there was any sun, the crust soon melted and they sank up to their thighs in the soft powder. Then Fito Strauch discovered that if cushions from the passenger seats were tied to their boots, they made passable snowshoes. Walking in this way was difficult but it was possible, and both he and Canessa immediately wanted to set off up the mountain, not only to see what was on the other side but to discover if any of their friends had survived the crash and were living in the tail.

There were other incentives. Roque had told them that in the tail they would find batteries to power the VHF radio. There might also be suitcases scattered down the mountainside, for the track of the plane was still visible in the snow. These would provide them with extra clothes.

Carlitos Páez and Numa Turcatti were also eager to climb the mountain, and on the morning of Tuesday, 17 October, all four set out. They walked for an hour, rested, and then walked on. As the sun rose in the sky, the crust melted and they had to tie on the cushions, which soon became sodden. None of them had eaten anything substantial for nearly five days, and soon Canessa suggested that they turn back. He was overruled and they struggled on, but a short time

later Fito sank waist deep in snow on the brink of a crevasse. This frightened them all. The plane beneath them seemed small in the vast landscape; the boys around it were specks on the snow. There were no suitcases to be seen and no sign of the tail.

"We'll never make it," said Canessa. "Look how weak we've become without food."

"Do you know what Nando said to me?" Carlitos said to Fito. "He said that if we weren't rescued, he'd eat one of the pilots to get out of here." There was a pause; then Carlitos added, "That hit on the head must have made him slightly mad."

"I don't know," said Fito, his honest, serious features quite composed. "It might be the only way to survive."

Carlitos said nothing, and they turned to go back down the mountain.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EXPEDITION depressed them all. During the following days Lilian Methol continued to comfort those who were afraid, and Pancho Delgado did his best to keep up their spirit of optimism, but the days were passing without the least sign that rescue might come, and they had all seen how the toughest among them had fared on a short climb up the mountain. What hope, then, could there be for the weak and injured?

On their eighth night on the mountain, Parrado awoke and felt that Susana had grown cold and still in his embrace. At once he pressed his mouth to hers, and with tears streaming down his cheeks blew air into her lungs. The other boys watched and prayed as Parrado tried to revive his sister. When exhaustion forced him to give up, Carlitos Pérez took over the task, but it was all to no avail. Susana was dead.

Two

When air traffic control at the airport of Pudahuel in Santiago first lost contact with the Uruguayan Fairchild on the afternoon of Friday, 13 October, they immediately telephoned the *Servicio Aéreo de Rescate* (the aerial rescue service), with headquarters at Santiago's other airport, Los Cerrillos. The commander of the SAR was away, so two former commanders were called in to direct the search-and-rescue operation—Carlos García and Jorge Massa.

García and Massa analysed the information they had, and

concluded that the plane could not possibly have been over Curicó when the pilot had reported this position, but over Planchon rather, so that instead of turning towards Santiago and descending to the airport of Pudahuel, the Fairchild had turned into the middle of the Andes and flown down into the area of the Tinguiririca, Sosneado, and Palomo mountains. García and Massa plotted a twenty-inch square on their map, representing the area in which the crash must have occurred. They then sent planes out from Santiago to cover it.

The difficulties presented were obvious. The mountains there rose to fifteen thousand feet. If the Fairchild had crashed anywhere among them, it would certainly have fallen into one of the valleys which were covered with snow. Since the Fairchild had a white roof, it would be virtually invisible to an aeroplane flying above the level of the peaks. To fly in the turbulence between the peaks was a sure way to lose further planes. There was also, that first day, a snowstorm over Planchon, so nothing could be seen.

From the very start, the professionals in the control room of the SAR at the airport of Los Cerrillos had little hope that anyone could survive a crash in the middle of the cordillera. Realizing that the temperature in the mountains at that time of year went down at night to thirty or forty degrees below zero, they felt that, if a few of the passengers had survived the crash, they would certainly have died of cold.

There is, however, an international convention that the country in which an accident occurs will search for the wreck for ten days, and it was a duty the SAR had to perform. Moreover, the relatives of the passengers had started to arrive in Santiago.

CARLOS PÁEZ VILARÓ, a well-known painter and the father of Carlitos Páez, was the first to arrive at SAR headquarters at Los Cerrillos. He had heard the news of the plane's disappearance while visiting his former wife's home in Carrasco; since the divorce the children had lived with their mother, Madelon Rodriguez. On Saturday afternoon he flew in an air force DC-6 along the likely route of the Fairchild. When he returned to the airport another of the boys' relatives had arrived, and by the next day there were a total of twenty-two on the scene.

Faced with this flood, Commander Massa announced that no more relatives would be permitted to fly on the planes taking part in the search, so they congregated instead in the office of César Charlone, the Uruguayan chargé d'affaires in Santiago.

On Monday, 16 October, search parties set off overland, made up of *carabineros* (Chilean militarized police) and members of the *Cuerpo de Socorro Andino*, a body of volunteers formed to rescue those who are lost in the Andes. They left from Rancagua and made for the area between Planchon and El Tiburcio but were stopped in the afternoon by heavy snow and strong winds.

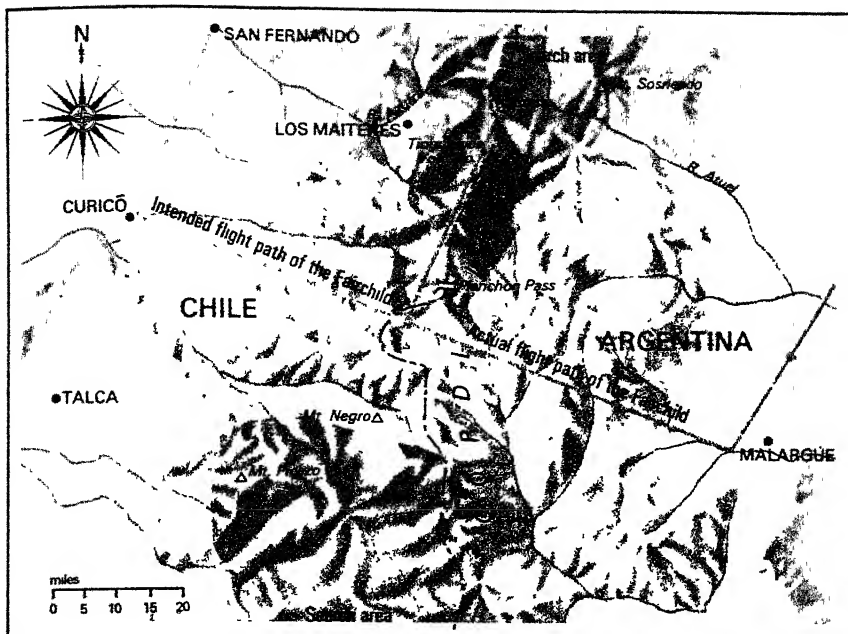
Those weather conditions also grounded the planes the next day and the day after that, 17 and 18 October. Impenetrable clouds and snow covered the whole area of the search. Dispirited, some of the relatives returned to Montevideo. But Páez Vilaró had told Madelon that he himself would find the boys, and he began to consider what he might do on his own. He sought out a local expert on the Tinguiririca and Palomo mountains and persuaded him to travel to the area with him the next day. It took two days, by car and on horseback, to reach the western slope of the Tinguiririca volcano. A heavy snowfall emphasized the emptiness of the place, and as Páez Vilaró stood staring at the immense mass of the mountain there was nothing to be seen—either living or dead. They had no alternative but to return.

The search by the SAR was resumed on 19 October. It continued throughout that day and the next and into the morning of 21 October. At the same time, sorties were flown by Argentinian planes from Mendoza. Some parents searched in a Cessna lent to them by the aero club of San Fernando. In spite of all this effort, there was no trace of the Fairchild, and at midday on 21 October, commanders García and Massa announced that “the search for the Uruguayan aircraft 571 is cancelled because of negative results”.

Three

On the morning of 21 October the body of Susana Parrado was dragged out onto the snow. No sound but the wind met the ears of the survivors as they stumbled from the cabin; nothing was to be seen but the same monotonous arena of rock and snow.

The seats of the plane were laid out on the snow like deck chairs on a veranda. Here, the first out would sit down to melt snow for drinking water. Each could see in the face of his companions the rapid progress of their physical deterioration. The movements of those who busied themselves in the cabin or around the fuselage had grown heavy and slow. They were all exhausted by the slightest



The area of the crash, high in the Andes.

exertion. Many remained sitting where they had slept, too depressed even to go out into the fresh air. Irritability was an increasing problem.

Marcelo Pérez, the team's captain, did what he could to set an example. He was optimistic and he was fair. He talked confidently of rescue and tried to get the boys to sing songs, but no one had the spirit to sing. It was also becoming evident to them all that he was not as confident as he seemed. At night he was overtaken by melancholy: his mind turned to his mother at home and how much she must be suffering. He tried to hide his sobs from the others, but if he slept he would dream and wake screaming.

There were two or three others, however, whose courage acted as pillars to morale. Echavarren, in considerable pain from his smashed leg, remained cheerful. Enrique Platero was energetic and brave despite the wound in his stomach, and at night they all said the rosary with Carlitos Pérez.

They awoke on Sunday morning to face their tenth day on the mountain. First to leave the plane were Marcelo Pérez and Roy Harley. Roy had found a transistor radio between two seats and, by

using a modest knowledge of electronics, acquired when helping a friend construct a hi-fi system, he had made an aerial with strands of wire from the plane's electric circuits. While he turned the dial, Marcelo held the aerial and moved it around. They picked up scraps of broadcasts from Chile but no news of the rescue effort.

Few of the other boys came out into the snow. Lack of food was taking its effect. They were becoming weaker, and when they stood up they felt faint and found it difficult to keep their balance. They felt cold, even when the sun rose to warm them, and their skin started to grow wrinkled like that of old men.

Their food supplies were running out. The daily scrap of chocolate, capful of wine and teaspoonful of jam or tinned fish—eaten slowly to make it last—was more torture than sustenance for these athletic boys. It was clear to them all that they could not survive much longer, and their minds turned to other sources of food.

It seemed impossible that there should be nothing whatsoever growing in the mountains: even the meanest form of plant life might provide some nutrition. But the only exposed ground was barren rock on which they found nothing but brittle lichen. They scraped some of it off and mixed it into a paste with melted snow, but the taste was bitter and disgusting, and as food it was worthless.

For some days several of the boys had realized that if they were to survive they would have to eat the bodies of those who had died in the crash. It was a ghastly prospect. The corpses lay around the plane in the snow, preserved by the intense cold in the state in which they had died. While the thought of cutting flesh from those who had been their friends was deeply repugnant to them all, a lucid appreciation of their predicament led them to consider it.

Finally, Canessa brought the subject out into the open. He argued forcefully that they were not going to be rescued; that they would have to escape themselves, but that nothing could be done without food; and that the only food was human flesh. He did not argue just from expediency. He insisted that they had a moral duty to stay alive by any means at their disposal, and because Canessa was earnest about his religious belief, great weight was given to what he said by the more pious among the survivors.

"It is meat," he said. "That's all it is. The souls have left their bodies and are in heaven with God. Only the carcasses are left, and they are no more human beings than the dead flesh of the cattle we eat at home."

The truth of what he said was incontestable. God wanted them to

live, and he had given them the means to do so in the dead bodies of their friends.

Marcelo still shrank from a decision. Then Zerbino turned to his captain and said, "I know that if my dead body could help you to stay alive, then I'd certainly want you to use it. In fact, if I do die and you don't eat me, then I'll come back from wherever I am and give you a good kick in the backside."

This argument allayed many doubts, for however reluctant each boy might be to eat the flesh of a friend, all of them agreed with Zerbino. There and then they made a pact that if any more of them were to die, their bodies were to be used as food.

Numa Turcatti and his friend Coche Inciarte, however, told their companions that while they did not think it would be wrong, they knew that they themselves could not do it. Liliانا Methol agreed with them. Her instinct to survive was strong, her longing for her children at home was acute, but the thought of eating human flesh horrified her. She did not think it wrong; she could distinguish between sin and physical revulsion, and a social taboo was not a law of God. "But," she said, "as long as there is a chance of rescue, as long as there is *something* left to eat, then I can't do it."

Javier Methol agreed with his wife. Indeed, they all believed that virtue lay in survival and that eating their dead friends would in no way endanger their souls, but it was one thing to decide and another to act.

Their discussions continued most of the day. At last a group of four—Canessa, Maspons, Zerbino and Fito Strauch—rose and went out into the snow. Few followed them. No one wished to know who was going to cut the meat or from which body it was to be taken.

Most of the bodies were covered by snow, but one protruded a few yards from the plane. With no exchange of words Canessa knelt, bared the skin, and cut into the flesh with a piece of broken glass. It was frozen hard and difficult to cut, but he persisted until he had cut away twenty slivers. He then stood up, went back to the plane, and placed them on the roof.

Inside there was silence. The boys cowered in the Fairchild. Canessa told them that the meat was there on the roof, drying in the sun, and that those who wished to do so should come out and eat it. No one came, and again Canessa took it upon himself to prove his resolution. He prayed to God to help him do what he knew to be right and then took a piece of meat in his hand. The horror of the act paralysed him. His hand would neither rise to his mouth nor fall to

Survivors' Journeys



The crash area, showing the expeditions of the survivors.

his side while the revulsion which possessed him struggled with his stubborn will. The will prevailed. The hand rose and pushed the meat into his mouth. He swallowed it, and felt triumphant. His conscience had overcome a primitive, irrational taboo. He was going to survive.

Later that evening small groups of boys came out of the plane to follow his example. Zerbino took a strip and swallowed it as Canessa had done, but it stuck in his throat. He scooped a handful of snow into his mouth and managed to wash it down. Fito Strauch followed his example, then Maspons and Vizintín and others.

THOSE WHO FIRST PEERED through the portholes of the plane the next morning could see that the sky was overcast but that a little sun shone through the clouds onto the snow. Roy Harley climbed over those nearest the entrance to follow Marcelo out of the plane and set up the radio. One or two others followed him out.

Marcelo had already taken hold of the aerial and was waiting while Roy picked up the radio and tuned in to a station in Chile. He heard the last words of a news bulletin. "The SAR has requested all commercial and military aircraft overflying the cordillera to check for any sign of the wreckage of the Fairchild Number Five Seventy-one. This follows the cancellation of the search by the SAR for the Uruguayan aircraft because of negative results."

The newscaster moved on to a different topic. Marcelo dropped the aerial, covered his face with his hands, and wept with despair. The others began to sob and pray, all except a young boy called Gustavo Nicolich who said, "We must tell the others. They must know the worst."

"I can't, I can't," said Marcelo, still sobbing into his hands.

"I'll tell them," said Nicolich, and he turned back towards the entrance to the plane. "Hey, boys," he shouted, "there's some good news! We just heard it on the radio. They've called off the search."

Inside the crowded cabin there was silence.

"Why the hell is that good news?" Páez shouted angrily.

"Because it means," Nicolich said, "that we're going to get out of here on our own."

The courage of this one boy prevented a flood of total despair, but the news broke Marcelo. His role as their leader became empty and the life went out of his eyes. Pancho Delgado, too, was changed by the news. His eloquent and cheerful optimism evaporated. He seemed to have no faith that they would get out by their own efforts

and quietly withdrew into the background. Of the old optimists, only Liliana Methol still offered hope and consolation. "Don't worry," she said, "we'll get out of here, all right. They'll find us when the snow melts."

To escape: that was the new obsession. Nando Parrado at once announced his intention of setting off—on his own, if necessary—and it was only with great difficulty that the others restrained him. Ten days before he had been given up for dead. If anyone was going to climb the mountains, there were others in a much better physical condition to do so.

It was accepted, however, that before they got any weaker a group of the fittest among them should set off at once, and a little more than an hour after they had heard the news on the radio, Zerbino, Turcatti and Maspons set off up the mountain.

Canessa and Fito Strauch returned to the corpse they had opened the day before and cut more flesh off the bones. The strips they had put on the roof of the plane had now all been eaten, and no one suffered any ill effects; not only was the meat easier to swallow when dried in the outside air, but the knowledge that they were not going to be rescued had persuaded many of those who had hesitated the day before. One by one, the boys forced themselves to swallow the flesh of their friends.

Now that it was established that they were to live off the dead, a group of those who remained behind was organized to cover the corpses with snow, while those who were weaker or injured sat holding the aluminium water-makers towards the sun, catching the drops of water in empty wine bottles. Others tidied the cabin. Canessa, when he had cut enough meat for their immediate needs, made a tour of inspection of the wounded. He was moderately content with what he saw. Almost all the superficial wounds were continuing to heal, and none showed signs of infection. The swelling around broken bones was also subsiding; Alvaro Mangino and Pancho Delgado, for example, both managed to hobble around outside the plane despite considerable pain. Arturo Nogueira, a shy, withdrawn boy who had broken both legs, was worse off: if he came outside he had to crawl, pulling himself forward with his arms. The state of Rafael Echavarren's torn leg was growing serious, showing the first indications of gangrene.

Enrico Platero, the boy who had had the tube of steel removed from his stomach, told Canessa that he was feeling perfectly well but that a piece of his insides still protruded from the wound. The doctor

confirmed the patient's observation: the wound was healing well but something stuck out from the skin. Canessa prepared to operate. As scalpel he had a choice between a piece of broken glass or a razor blade. He disinfected the wound with eau de cologne and carefully cut away the protruding gristle. With a prod from the surgeon's finger, the gut retired into Platero's stomach.

"Do you want me to stitch you up?" Canessa asked his patient. "I should warn you that we don't have any surgical thread."

"Don't worry," said Platero, rising on his elbows and looking down at his stomach. "This is fine. Just tie it up again and I'll be on my way."

Canessa retied the rugby shirt bandage as tightly as he could, and Platero swung his legs off the door he had been lying on and got to his feet. "Now I'm ready to go on an expedition," he said, "and when we get back to Montevideo I'll take you on as my doctor. I couldn't possibly hope for a better one."

MEANWHILE ZERBINO, TURCATTI AND MASPONS were following the track of the plane up the mountain. The slope seemed almost vertical, and they had to clutch at the snow with their bare hands. They had left in such a hurry that they had not thought how to equip themselves for the climb, and they wore only gym shoes or moccasins, with thin trousers and light jackets. All three were strong, but they had barely eaten for the last eleven days.

Despite their freezing, sodden feet they continued to climb, but by seven o'clock in the evening they were only halfway to the peak. They sat down to discuss what they should do. The sun had gone behind the mountain and they all agreed that it would undoubtedly get much colder; on the other hand, if they simply slid back down, the whole climb was for nothing. They made up their minds to spend the night on the mountain, and as dark came upon them they piled up some loose stones to form a windbreak.

There was no question of sleep. They had to hit one another with their fists and feet to keep their circulation going, begging one another to be hit in the face until their mouths were frozen and no words would come. Not one of the three thought that he would survive the night, and when the sun eventually rose in the sky each one was amazed to see it.

Warmed by the sun, they set off up the mountain, every now and then stopping to glance back towards the wreck of the Fairchild. By now it was a tiny dot in the snow, almost indistinguishable from the

thousands of outcrops of rock, and it was clear to the boys that the plane simply could not be seen from the air. Nor was this all that depressed them. The higher they climbed, the more snow-covered mountains came into view, and every time they thought they had reached the summit, they would find they were only at the top of a ridge and that the mountain itself still towered above them. There was still no sign of the tail section or any other wreckage.

At last, they decided to turn back.

THE TWENTY-FOUR OTHER SURVIVORS were delighted to see the three return, but bitterly disappointed that they had neither reached the summit of the mountain nor found the tail, and appalled at their physical condition. All three hobbled on frozen feet and looked dreadful after their night out on the mountainside. They were immediately taken into the fuselage on cushions and brought large pieces of meat, which they gobbled down. Their feet were red and swollen with the cold, and their friends massaged them gently. It escaped no one's notice that this expedition of a single day had almost killed three of the strongest among them.

On one of the days which followed, the sun disappeared behind clouds, making the aluminium snow-melting devices useless. It occurred to Carlitos Páez to make a fire with some empty crates they had found in the luggage compartment. They held the aluminium sheets over the fire, and soon collected enough water.

Afterwards, when the embers were still hot, it seemed sensible to try cooking a piece of the meat. The aroma soon brought other boys around the fire, and even Coche Inciarte, who had continued to feel the greatest repugnance for raw flesh, found it quite palatable when cooked. Roy Harley, Numa Turcatti and Eduardo Strauch also found it easier to overcome their revulsion.

The only two who had still not eaten human flesh were the two eldest among them, Liliana and Javier Methol, and as the days passed and the twenty-five young men grew stronger on their new diet, the married couple grew thinner and more feeble. Marcelo begged them over and over again to overcome their reluctance, and at last when Marcelo offered him a piece of flesh Javier took it and thrust it down his throat.

There remained only Liliana. Weak though she was her mood remained serene, and she wrote a short note to her children saying how dear they were to her. That night, she and her husband talked together of the four children they might never see again.

Then Javier said to her, "Liliana, let's face it. We'll never see them if we don't survive. God wants us to survive, and there's only one way."

At Javier's request, Marcelo produced a small portion of meat which had been dried in the sun. Liliana took a piece and forced it down into her stomach.

Four

The news that the Chileans had abandoned the search for their sons after only eight days, on two of which all planes had been grounded because of bad weather, appalled those parents who were still convinced that their sons were alive. In Chile, Páez Vilaró, father of Carlitos Páez, announced that his search would go on. Meanwhile, at her home in Uruguay Madelon Rodriguez, Páez Vilaró's former wife and mother of Carlitos, tried to contact Gerard Croiset, the famous Dutch clairvoyant.

Croiset's most notable talent was for finding missing people, and for this reason he had often been consulted by the police in Holland and the United States. Unfortunately, when Madelon telephoned the Parapsychological Institute in Utrecht, she was told that Gerard Croiset was in a hospital recuperating after an operation. She pleaded nevertheless to be put in touch with him, and eventually she was put through to his son, also named Gerard, who was thought to have inherited his father's powers. Through the interpreter young Croiset asked for a map of the Andes to be sent to him.

Madelon immediately dispatched an aeronautical chart of the area, and when she next telephoned young Croiset he told her that he had been in contact with the plane. One of its engines had broken down, and it had lost height. The pilot had not been flying the plane, but the co-pilot had crossed the Andes before and remembered a valley where he thought he could make an emergency landing. He had therefore turned and had crashed by a lake near Talca, forty-one miles from Planchon. The plane lay "like a worm"; its nose was crushed. He could no longer see the pilots but he could see life. There were survivors.

The news that the Dutch clairvoyant had made contact with the plane spread rapidly among the other parents. Although many of them treated it with scepticism, especially the fathers, they nevertheless appointed a delegation of three to go to the commander

in chief of the Uruguayan Air Force and make a formal request for an Uruguayan aircraft to be sent to Chile to search for the Fairchild in the mountains about one hundred and fifty miles south of Santiago. This request was refused.

The news of young Croiset's vision did much to raise Páez Vilaró's morale, however. He had always found magic more impressive than science. He immediately set out, and the next day he was flying over the mountains around Talca in a plane obtained at the aero club of San Fernando.

In the days which followed he lived in a frenzy of activity. He did not remain in Talca itself but set off on several overland expeditions into the Andes. In every village he came to, he asked if anyone had seen a plane fall from the sky, and he listened to many fascinating but irrelevant stories.

His reputation preceded him. Now, when he entered a village, a small crowd would gather and people would shout, "Here comes the lunatic who's looking for his son!" Páez Vilaró did not mind; by plane and on foot he scoured the area forty-one miles from the air lane over Planchon, yet nothing was found. He requested Croiset be rung once again and asked for more details. This was done, and night after night at 2:00 am Croiset, in his pyjamas, would answer the telephone and summon images of the Andes into his mind.

ON SUNDAY, 29 OCTOBER, Marcelo Pérez's mother Estela invited the parents and relations of the boys who had gone in the Fairchild to come to her house that afternoon for a meeting.

The table in Estela's spacious living room was covered with maps of the Andes, with circles and lines drawn around Talca to show what areas had already been covered by Páez Vilaró.

Jorge Zerbino, a lawyer and businessman, turned to Luis Surraco, a doctor, and the father of Roberto Canessa's *novia*. "I'm going to Chile, Luis. Do you want to come with me?"

Dr. Surraco was adept at reading maps, and they listened to him describe where the two might search. The clairvoyant had sent some new scraps of information: in the lake where the plane had crashed there was an island. Though Zerbino and Surraco both had grave misgivings about Croiset, they knew quite well that their expedition was not so much to find the boys as to keep up the spirits of the women at home. They agreed, therefore, to search around Talca.

They flew to Santiago on 1 November, and in the afternoon continued their journey in a rented car. Páez Vilaró was waiting for

them. He remembered that on a former flight in a hired helicopter he had seen a lake with an island about sixty miles from Talca. The next day he flew to it again and searched in the area, but the result was negative.

The next day the Uruguayans wanted to search the same area, but the helicopter had to return to Santiago. They therefore set off on foot into the mountains on 3 November with two guides. In thick cloud they explored the rocks around the lake for signs of a plane. There were none.

They were back by 7 November, and the next day the helicopter was free again and returned from Santiago. In the morning and afternoon it checked an area where a peasant was reported to have heard the sound of a plane crashing to the ground. The Uruguayans waited for the results of these forays; they were all negative.

On 9 November the party returned to Talca, and a day later to Santiago. They reported to the SAR on what they had done, and the authorities repeated that the official search would not be resumed until the thaw had set in—"at the end of January, perhaps, or the beginning of February"—and then in the area of the Tinguiririca volcano.

Zerbino booked seats for himself and Surraco to return to Montevideo the next day. Páez Vilaró meanwhile had had printed several thousand leaflets offering, on behalf of the parents, a reward of three hundred thousand escudos to anyone who gave information leading to the finding of the Fairchild.

Five

The seventeenth day, 29 October, passed quite well for those stranded in the Fairchild. They were still cold, wet, dirty and hungry, and some were in great pain, but in the last few days a degree of order seemed to have been imposed on the chaos. Teams for cutting, melting snow and cleaning the cabin were working well, and the wounded were sleeping a little more comfortably in the hanging beds. More important still, they had started to single out the fittest among them as potential expeditionaries who would master the Andes and get help. Their mood was optimistic.

That night Roy Harley was lying on the floor with a shirt covering his face when he felt a faint vibration, and an instant later heard the sound of metal falling to the ground. This sound made him jump up,

but as he did so he was smothered in snow. He found himself standing buried up to his waist and when he took the shirt from his eyes what he saw appalled him. The plane was almost entirely filled with snow. The wall at the entrance had been toppled by an avalanche, and the sleeping bodies which had covered the floor were now hidden. Quickly, Roy turned to his right and burrowed for Carlitos, who had been sleeping there. He uncovered his face, then his torso, but still Carlitos could not free himself. There was a creak as the snow settled, and in the bitter cold its surface immediately began to form into ice.

Roy left Carlitos because he saw the hands of others sticking out of the snow. He uncovered Canessa and then went to the front of the cabin and dug out Fito Strauch. Fito had been talking with Coche Inciarte when the avalanche fell upon them. He realized immediately what had happened and struggled against the grip of the snow, but he could not move any part of his body, so he relaxed and thought with resignation that he was about to die. Then he heard voices and Roy Harley took hold of his hand.

Fito was freed. Eduardo climbed out of the same hole, and Inciarte, after digging a short tunnel, emerged followed by Daniel Fernández and Bobby Francois. They all began to burrow in the packed snow, and the first they dug for was Marcelo. When they found his face, however, they saw that he was already dead.

Parrado had been lying in the middle of the plane with Liliana Methol on his left and Daniel Maspons on his right. He heard and saw nothing but suddenly found that he was smothered and paralysed by an avalanche of snow. The weight on his chest was terrible, he grew dizzy, and he knew that he was about to die. He did not think of God, nor of his family, but remarked to himself, "OK, I'm dying." Then, just as his lungs were about to explode, the snow was scraped from his face.

Carlitos Páez had been uncovered to the waist by Roy but still couldn't move until Fito, when freed, dug away the snow from around his legs. He immediately began to look for his friends Gustavo Nicolich and Diego Storm, but when he found Gustavo and gripped his hand it was cold and lifeless. There was no time for lamentation. Carlitos at once burrowed towards Diego, but when he found him, Diego too was dead.

Pedro Algorta, still buried beneath the snow, had only what air he held in his lungs. He felt himself near to death, yet the knowledge that after his death his body would help the others to survive instilled

in him a kind of ecstasy. It was as if he were already at the portals of heaven. Then the snow was scooped away from his nose and mouth.

Roy Harley sank a shaft to bring air to Canessa's lungs. As soon as he could move Canessa searched for Daniel Maspons. He found his friend lying as if asleep, but he was dead.

The snow which covered Zerbino left a small cavity which enabled him to breathe for a few minutes. He found that he had thrown up one arm at the moment the avalanche struck, and his struggles opened a fissure in the snow beside it, down which air came to his lungs. Above him he heard Carlitos Páez shout down, "Is that you, Gustavo?"

"Yes!" shouted Zerbino. "I'm OK. Save someone else." He then waited in his tomb until the others had time to dig him out.

The mechanic, Carlos Roque and a boy called Juan Carlos Menéndez had been killed by the falling wall, but part of that wall saved the lives of the two others who slept next to it. Numa Turcatti and Pancho Delgado were trapped under the curved door, which had been the emergency exit to the plane and had been built into the wall, but they had air enough to breathe under its concave surface. They survived like this for six or seven minutes, until Inciarte came with Zerbino to their rescue.

Javier Methol had been able to reach out of the snow with his hand, but as they tried to free him he only shouted at the boys to dig towards his wife Liliana instead. Finally, he was freed by Zerbino, and together they dug for Liliana. When they found her she was dead. Javier slumped down onto the snow, weeping, overwhelmed by grief. His only consolation came from his conviction that she who had given such love and solace on earth must now be watching over him in heaven.

Javier was not alone in sorrow, for when the living huddled together in the few feet of space that was left to them between the roof of the plane and the icy floor of snow, they found that Enrique Platero, whose stomach wound had healed at last, was also dead. Eight had died under the snow.

NINETEEN SURVIVED. A second avalanche hit the plane an hour or so after the first, but because the entrance was already blocked, most of this second fall passed over the plane. In doing so, however, it completely buried the Fairchild.

The survivors were wet, cramped and bitterly cold, with no cushions, shoes or blankets to protect them. There was barely room

to sit or stand; they could only lie in a tangle, punching each other's bodies to keep the blood flowing in their veins. The night was endless, and after several hours the little air that was left in the plane became stale and stuffy. Some of the boys began to feel faint from the lack of oxygen. Roy went to the entrance and tried to dig an air shaft, but his arm could not reach up to the surface, and in any case the snow there had frozen into ice too hard to be penetrated by bare hands. Parrado then took one of the steel poles that had been used to make the hammocks. He worked by the light of five cigarette lighters as the boys around him watched anxiously, for they had no idea if the snow which covered them was one foot deep or twelve. But after poking the bar through and working it up, Parrado soon felt it slide unimpeded into the fresh air, and when he drew it back into the cabin it left a hole through which he could see the light of the moon.

Through this hole they watched for the coming of morning, and eventually a pale, lugubrious light filtered down. As soon as they could see what they were doing, they considered how to get out of their tomb. There was too much snow above them to get through the entrance, but it seemed to lie more thinly over the pilots' cabin. Zerbino squeezed past the dead pilots' bodies and reached the window which, because of the tilt of the plane, looked up towards the sky. He tried to open it but the snow piled on top was too heavy, so he came back down. Canessa tried, but he too failed. Roy went next and finally pushed out the glass and broke through the snow into daylight.

He pushed his head above the surface. It was about eight in the morning but darker than usual because the sky was overcast. Clouds of snow swirled around him. He lowered himself into the pilots' cabin and shouted to the others, "It's no good! There's a blizzard out there."

The blizzard continued throughout that day. It was 30 October and Numa Turcatti's twenty-fifth birthday. The boys gave him an extra cigarette and made a birthday cake out of the snow. Many would have liked to give him a better time, but instead it was he who improved their spirits. "We have survived the worst," he said. "From now on, things can only get better."

They did nothing that day but suck at snow and wait for the storm to abate. They talked a great deal about the avalanche. Some, like Inciarte, thought that the best of them had died because God loved them most, but others could make no sense of it.

Parrado expressed his determination to leave. "As soon as the

snow stops," he said, "I'm going. If we wait here any longer, we'll all get killed by another avalanche."

"I don't think so," replied Fito Strauch judiciously. "The plane's covered now. The second avalanche went over the top, so we're safe here for the time being. There's no reason why we shouldn't wait until the weather gets better."

"But how long?" asked Vizintín, another who wanted to leave at once.

"I remember in Santiago," said Algorta, "a taxi driver told me that the snow stops and summer starts on the fifteenth of November."

"The fifteenth of November," said Fito "That's just over two weeks. It's worth waiting that long if it adds to your chances of getting through."

No one could argue against this.

They ate nothing that day, and that night, as they huddled together to try and sleep, they all followed Carlitos in the rosary. The next day, 31 October, it was snowing just as heavily.

The bitter cold combined with their wet clothes to deplete their strength. They had eaten nothing for two days and now felt enormously hungry, and since they could not reach the bodies outside in the snow the cousins uncovered one of those who had been smothered in the avalanche. Before then, the flesh had either been cooked or at least dried in the sun; now there was no alternative but to eat it raw.

It was dreadful for all of them but Roberto Canessa and Fito Strauch argued, "You must eat. Otherwise you will die, and we need you alive." However, no arguments or exhortations could overcome the physical revulsion in Eduardo Strauch, Inciarte and Turcatti, and as a result their physical condition deteriorated.

On the first of November it had stopped snowing, and six of the boys climbed out onto the roof to warm themselves in the sun. Canessa and Zerbino dug the snow off the windows to let more light into the plane, and Fito and Eduardo Strauch and Daniel Fernández melted snow for drinking water. Carlitos thought about his family. He felt certain now that he would see them again. If God had saved him in both the accident and the avalanche, it could only be to reunite him with his family. The nearness of God in the still landscape set a seal on his conviction.

When the sun went behind a cloud it became cold again, and the six climbed back into the Fairchild. All they could do now was wait.

IN THE DAYS WHICH FOLLOWED the weather remained clear. There were no heavy falls of snow, and the stronger and more energetic among the nineteen survivors were able to dig a second tunnel out through the back of the plane. Once a tunnel had been made, they were able to set about removing from the cabin both the snow and those buried beneath it. It took eight days for the plane to be made more or less habitable, but a wall of snow remained at either end and the space they had to live in was more restricted than before—even allowing for the reduced numbers. There was only one advantage to ensue from the avalanche: the extra clothes which could be taken from the dead. Feeling that God would help them if they helped themselves, the survivors not only set about the tasks which would make their immediate life more bearable but planned and prepared for their ultimate escape.

Before the avalanche it had been decided that a party of the fittest among them should set off for Chile. Four or five would be chosen as expeditionaries. They would be given larger rations and the best places to sleep so that when the snow began to melt towards the end of November they would be strong, healthy and fit.

The first factor to be considered in choosing these expeditionaries was their physical condition. The choice narrowed to Parrado, Canessa, Harley, Páez, Turcatti and Vizintín. Some of them were more enthusiastic candidates than others. Parrado was so determined to escape that, had he not been chosen, he would have gone on his own. Canessa had more imagination than some of the others and foresaw the danger and hardship which would be involved, but he felt that because of his exceptional strength and acknowledged inventiveness it was his duty to go. Páez and Harley wanted to be expeditionaries but, though they were considered fit enough, some doubts were felt as to their maturity and strength of mind. Thus the expeditionaries became Parrado, Canessa and Turcatti, with Vizintín as the fourth.

Once the four expeditionaries had been chosen, they became a warrior class whose special obligations entitled them to special privileges. And just as their bodies were coddled, so were their minds. Prayers were said at night for their health and well-being, and all conversation in their hearing was of an optimistic nature.

The expeditionaries were not the leaders of the group but a caste apart, separated from the others by their privileges and preoccupations. They might have evolved into an oligarchy had not their powers been checked by the triumvirate of Fito and Eduardo

Strauch and Daniel Fernández. Of all the subgroups of friends and relatives that had existed before the avalanche, theirs was the only one to survive intact. The gang of younger boys had lost plucky Gustavo Nicolich and Diego Storm; Canessa and Nogueira had lost their friends Maspons and Platero; Methol had lost his wife. Gone too was Marcelo, the team leader they had inherited from the outside world.

The closeness of the relationship between Fito and Eduardo Strauch and Daniel Fernández gave them an immediate advantage over all the others in withstanding not the physical but the mental suffering caused by their isolation in the mountains. They also possessed those qualities of practicality which were of more use in their brutal predicament than the eloquence of Pancho Delgado or the gentle nature of Coche Inciarte. Fito, who was the youngest of the three, was the most respected: his realism, together with his strong faith in their ultimate salvation, led many of the boys to pin their hopes on him, and Carlitos and Roy suggested that he be made leader in place of Marcelo. But Fito refused this crown they offered him. There was no need to institutionalize the influence of the Strauch cousins.

Of all the work that had to be done, cutting meat off the bodies of their dead friends was the most difficult and unpleasant, and this was done by Fito, Eduardo and Daniel Fernández. It was a ghastly task which even those as tough as Parrado or Vizintín could not bring themselves to perform. The corpses had first to be dug out of the snow, then thawed in the sun. The Strauchs and Fernández would cut large pieces of meat from the body; these would then be passed to another team, which would divide the chunks into smaller pieces. This work was not so unpopular, for once the meat was separated from the bodies it was easier to forget what it was. They had, from necessity, come to eat almost every part of the bodies. Canessa knew that the liver contained the reserve of vitamins, and for that reason it was set aside for the expeditionaries.

DURING THE TEN DAYS between their choice of the four expeditionaries and 15 November, when they hoped the cold weather would come to an end, the nineteen survivors developed both as a group and as individuals.

Parrado, for example, who before the accident had been a would-be playboy, was now a hero. His courage, strength and unselfishness made him the best loved of them all. He was always the most

determined to brave the mountains and set out for civilization; and for this reason those who were younger, weaker, or had less determination placed all their faith in him. He also comforted them when they cried and took on himself much of the humdrum work around the plane from which, as an expeditionary, he was officially excused. He was simple, warm, fair-minded, optimistic and good-tempered. He rarely, if ever, swore and was most popular as a sleeping companion.

Next to Parrado, Numa Turcatti was the most generally beloved of the boys. He had a small, muscular body which from the first he had put to the service of their common cause. They all felt that if he and Parrado undertook an expedition it would succeed.

The other two expeditionaries did not inspire the same affection. It was recognized that Canessa had good ideas, but his personality made him difficult to live with. He was nervous and tense, bursting into bad temper at the smallest provocation, screaming imprecations and abuse. Spasmodically brave and unselfish, he was more often impatient and stubborn. He did what he liked and no one could stop him. Only Parrado had any influence over him. The Strauchs might have exercised some control, but they did not want to antagonize an expeditionary.

Vizintín was not as assertive as Canessa, but he was more self-centred and did not have the compensating qualities of inventiveness and ingenuity. He quarrelled with everyone, especially Inciarte and Algorta, and the only work he did was to melt snow for himself and do a few odd jobs that interested him; he made mittens for all the expeditionaries out of seat covers, and he made several pairs of sunglasses out of plastic salvaged from the pilots' cabin. At night he cried for his mother.

Alvaro Mangino, Bobby Francois and Moncho Sabella were all young and weak. They became part of a chorus who sat back in the sun melting snow, while others took the centre of the stage. Javier Methol, too, was one of the chorus. He was always dazed from the altitude sickness which continued to affect him. The boys, who were all at least ten years younger than he was, tended to regard him as a figure of fun. They played practical jokes on him, in which he joined, exaggerating his condition because he knew it amused the boys and kept up their spirits. He would comfort them when they were unhappy. So too would Coche Inciarte, who was equal to Parrado and Turcatti in the affections of the group.

Pancho Delgado was a boy of considerable eloquence and charm and had hitherto done well in life by the use of these talents. But

charm and eloquence were not the qualities looked for in extreme conditions. Indeed, the eloquence that Delgado had shown now counted against him. Many of them did not forgive him his facile optimism. He was one of the oldest and should have known better than to raise their hopes without good cause.

Roy Harley became fragile, weeping if anyone spoke sharply to him and talking in a high-pitched whine like a petulant child. Carlitos Páez, on the other hand, became increasingly hard-working and responsible. He not only helped cut the meat but took on the duties of closing the entrance at night.

He had adverse qualities. He was bossy and quarrelsome, yet his novel personality made a unique contribution to the morale of the group. Although the youngest, he was thick-set, with a gruff voice like some giant teddy bear. He made them smile not so much because his jokes were funny but because of the comic effect of his whole personality.

Gustavo Zerbino, at nineteen one of the youngest in the group, was affectionate but tense. Like Canessa, he became easily over-excited and would fly into hysterical rage if, for instance, someone took his place in the plane opposite Daniel Fernández. It was to Fernández that he particularly attached himself. With Fernández, Zerbino made himself responsible for collecting and guarding all the money and documents of those who had died. He also took it upon himself to investigate any misdemeanours. For this, he was sometimes called "the detective". He was also consistently pessimistic. If Fito sent him out to see what the weather was like, he would always return and say, "It's bitterly cold and there's a blizzard just getting under way."

Then Fito would turn to Carlitos and say, "You go and have a look." And Carlitos, who was an optimist, would return and report, "There's a little snow but it won't last long. In half an hour we'll have a clear blue sky."

Pedro Algorta was an unlikely hero. He was shy, introspective, and a socialist, while the others were boisterous, extroverted and conservative. Another disadvantage was his amnesia: he still could not remember what had happened in the days preceding the accident. But his mind was sufficiently alert for him to realize that he must work to survive, and his efforts gained the approbation of the cousins, especially Fito.

The three who were the government of this little community, Eduardo and Fito Strauch and Daniel Fernández, were not as individuals so different from the others. They dominated the group by virtue of the strength they brought to one another.



*The Expeditionaries. Left to right: Parrado, Canessa, Vizintín.
(Not shown: Turcatti, who died.)*

*The Government of Cousins. Left to right:
Fito Strauch, Eduardo Strauch, Fernández.*



Daniel Fernández, for instance, was the oldest of the survivors after Methol, and was conscious of the responsibility this placed on him. He was mature even for his age (he was twenty-six) and worked hard at keeping the cabin tidy and controlling the distribution of lighters and knives. Though temperamentally shy, Daniel liked to talk and tell stories. He was calm, responsible and fair. Indeed, the only qualities he lacked were physical strength and an assertive personality.

Eduardo Strauch, although nicknamed “the German”, was in most ways less German than his two cousins. In appearance he took after his mother, having a smaller frame than Fito. His demeanour was attractive and his manner personable. He was the most urbane of the nineteen—perhaps because he had travelled in Europe—and had the most open mind. In general he was calm, and kind to the younger boys, but he was capable of passionate anger.

Fito Strauch was more temperamental than Eduardo, but he inspired more confidence in the group. When they considered their predicament, his thinking was always the most positive, his judgment the most sound. He also had to his credit the invention of the sunglasses, which they needed to protect their eyes from the snow. Taking the sun visors, which were made of shaded plastic from the pilots' cabin, he cut out two small circles and sewed them into plastic surrounds which had been cut from the cover of a folder containing the flight plan.

THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT which had evolved worked well. There were checks and balances. The Strauch cousins with their auxiliaries limited the power of the expeditionaries, and the expeditionaries limited the power of the Strauchs. Both groups respected one another, and both acted with the tacit consent of all nineteen.

There were two among them who could play no part in the group because of the leg injuries they had suffered at the time of the accident. These were Rafael Echavarren and Arturo Nogueira. They both slept on the hammock that had been made by Canessa, and rarely left the plane. It hurt them too much to walk, and to drag themselves out into the snow took almost more strength than was left in their limbs.

The two were quite different in background and temperament. Echavarren, twenty-two and a conservative, had an open and courageous nature. The condition of his leg was appalling. The calf muscle which had been torn away from the leg had been pushed back into place, but the wound had become septic. Worse still, he was unable to move his leg or wriggle his feet at night, so the toes went purple and then black as they were attacked by frostbite.

He was nevertheless utterly determined to escape. Every morning he would say to himself, "I am Rafael Echavarren and I swear I shall return," and when someone suggested that he should write a letter to his parents he replied, "No, I'll tell them all about it when I get back." This faith made him popular with the other boys, as did his openness and honesty. When people knocked against his leg he would curse them and then, a minute or two later, apologize.

Arturo Nogueira had broken both legs in the crash. A year younger than Echavarren, he was in better physical condition but his mental state was the worst of all. Even before the accident he had been a difficult person, closed and silent even in his own family. His only passion was politics. His strong sense of justice made him a

militant idealist—sometimes socialist, sometimes anarchist. He had more or less abandoned the Church of Rome. Like Zerbino, he had worked in the slums of Montevideo at the behest of the Jesuits, but now he believed in more sweeping solutions to the problems of poverty and oppression.

In the plane he lay alone, his wide green eyes staring from an emaciated face. He told Parrado that he knew he was going to die. He was barbed and moody with the others, and no one, in those conditions, took the trouble to penetrate his unfriendly exterior.

His antagonism towards the others was largely political. He and Echavarren quarrelled ostensibly over blankets and the position of their feet, but it was the underlying divergence in their views that made their quarrels so acrimonious. During the day, even when the sun was shining, Nogueira would remain in the plane. He would catch water which dripped through a hole in the roof, or Algorta, Canessa and Zerbino would bring him water from outside. They would talk to him about his family and try and persuade him to go outside the plane, because some of them suspected that the injuries to his legs were imaginary, but all that these friends did to raise his spirits was to no avail.

It was cold, dark and wet in the plane. Those who remained inside breathed only its dank air. Nogueira became weaker. One night, as they were settling down to sleep, he asked if he could lead the rosary. They agreed that he should, and Páez handed him his beads. Arturo then spoke his intentions, praying to God for their families, their country, their companions who were dead and those who were there. He spoke with such feeling in his voice that the other eighteen were struck with a new respect and affection for him. When he had finished the five decades they were all silent; only Arturo himself could be heard weeping silently on the hammock. Pedro looked up at him and asked him why he was crying. "Because I am so close to God," Arturo replied.

A day later Arturo became weaker still and feverish. Pedro Algorta went up onto the hammock to sleep beside him and provide some warmth. His talk was disconnected, and later he became delirious.

"Look, here comes the milk cart. Here's the farmer with the milk. Quickly, open the door!" He raved on about the milk cart, then an ice-cream cart, then lunch with his family on a Sunday. He was shivering with a high fever, and he remained half in a coma, half delirious, throughout the next day. That night it was so cold that

they brought him down from the hammock to sleep on the floor. He was quieter now and he slept in Pedro's arms. It was in this position that he died.

NOGUEIRA'S DEATH CAME as a shock to them all. It destroyed the thesis that those who had survived the avalanche were destined to live. Escape became more urgent, and the boys became impatient for the expeditionaries to set out, but they were still trapped in the plane for days at a time by the bitterly cold winds and driving snow.

In the days following the avalanche the inside of the plane became a mess. The boys were often confined in the plane for fifteen hours at a time, and only the cold prevented an overpowering stench. It was difficult to sleep, and they also suffered from an understandable fear of another avalanche. They could often hear odd sounds outside the plane—stones would break loose from the mountains and tumble down towards them. Once one hit the plane as they were trying to sleep, and Inciarte and Sabella leaped to their feet, to the discomfort and annoyance of whoever slept beside them.

It was this kind of irritation which caused the quarrels. Bickering was also the only way in which they could release the intense frustration which had built up inside them. If someone knocked against Echavarren's leg, for example, he would scream out of all proportion to the pain it had caused, thereby giving vent to the nagging agony that he suffered all the time.

Before sleeping at night they would talk together. Several subjects were touched upon, such as rugby, which most of them played, or agronomy, which most of them studied, but somehow they would always end up discussing food. What they lacked in their daily diet they made up for in their imagination.

Methol was their expert on food. He had lived the longest and so eaten the most, and when they started to describe all the restaurants they knew in Montevideo, each with its speciality, he was the one who could name the most. Inciarte made a register in a notebook and, when the last restaurant had been entered in it, they numbered ninety-eight. They also had a competition to see who could invent the best menu—including wines—but after a while these imaginary feasts came to cause more suffering than enjoyment. It depressed them when they came out of their gourmandizing dreams to the reality of raw flesh, and they therefore came to a tacit agreement that conversation about food should stop.

Later they planned a Regional Consortium of Agricultural

Experimentation, in which Pedro was to have charge of the rabbits. They would all live together on some land that Carlitos owned in the Coronilla, in adjoining houses designed by Eduardo.

There was no sexual frustration in a physical sense. All sexual feeling seemed to have left them, owing no doubt to the cold and their own debility. And when they thought of their *novias*, or talked about them, it was always with purity and respect. They had too great a need of God to offend him with salacious thoughts and conversation. Death was too close to risk even the smallest sin.

Finally, their chief preoccupation and topic of conversation was their escape. The expedition was planned over and over again. Its equipment was discussed, designed and manufactured. The route was discussed by the whole group. In assessing its direction they were faced with two conflicting pieces of evidence. They knew from the dying words of the pilot that they had passed Curicó, that Curicó was in Chile, that Chile was to the west. They also knew, however, that all water flows to the sea; and the plane's compass, which was still intact, showed that the valley they were in ran down to the east.

The only answer that seemed to satisfy all the criteria was that the valley curved around the mountains to the northeast and doubled back on itself to run west. On this assumption the expeditionaries planned to set off down the valley, even though they believed this would be walking away from Chile. The mountains behind them were so immense that there was no question of climbing over them. To go west they could only go east.

AS IT DREW NEARER to the fifteenth of November when they believed the warm weather would begin, an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation grew up in the plane. There were repeated discussions of who would be the first to telephone their parents and how casual and blasé they would be about their escape.

The expeditionaries themselves were more preoccupied with the practical problems which faced them—especially protection against the cold. Each assembled three pairs of trousers, a T-shirt, two sweaters and an overcoat. They had the three best pairs of dark glasses. They knew however that the chief problem which would face them was the insulation of their feet against the cold. They had rugby boots, but they had no thick socks.

The only setback they suffered as the date of their departure approached was that someone stepped on Numa Turcatti's leg and

the resulting bruise began to go septic. Numa, however, dismissed this as insignificant.

The boys awoke early on the morning of 15 November and helped the expeditionaries to put on their equipment. It was snowing, but by seven o'clock the four had set out. Parrado had taken one of the small red shoes he had bought for his nephew and left the other hanging in the plane, saying to the others that he would be back to fetch it. He was back sooner than they thought. The snow got much worse, and after three hours they returned.

There followed two days of weather as bad as any they had experienced, with high winds and a blizzard. Pedro Algorta, who had told them that summer set in on the fifteenth, became for a time the butt of their disappointment and hostility. And in those extra days that they waited Turcatti's leg became worse. It was extremely painful for him to walk, yet when Canessa told him that he was not fit to go on the expedition Numa became angry. He insisted that he was well enough, but it was clear to all that he would only hold them back, and he was obliged to accept the decision of the majority. On the morning of Friday, 17 November, after five weeks on the mountain, they awoke to a clear blue sky. There was nothing now to stop the depleted force of expeditionaries.

Canessa led the expedition, pulling as a sledge half a Samsonite suitcase on which were piled four stockings filled with meat, a bottle of water and the cushions they would use as snowshoes when the sun melted the hard surface of the snow. Vizintín came next, loaded like a packhorse with all the blankets, and Parrado brought up the rear.

They made quick progress towards the northeast. They were going downhill and their rugby boots gripped well on the frozen snow. After walking for two hours they reached the top of a hillock of snow and there, a hundred yards ahead of them, was the tail of the Fairchild. What immediately excited their interest were the suitcases that they could see scattered around it. They opened them and rummaged through their contents. It was like finding treasure; there were jeans, sweaters and socks. They also found a box of chocolates, from which they immediately ate four each, but decided to ration the rest.

The three boys then stripped off the filthy garments they were wearing and changed into the warmest clothes they could find. There were now plenty of good woollen socks, and they took three pairs each.

Next they went into the tail itself and found, in the galley, a packet

of sugar and three meat pasties. The latter they thawed in the sun and ate; the sugar they kept for later. Behind the galley there was a luggage compartment in which there were more suitcases. In one they found a bottle of rum, and in many there were cartons of cigarettes.

They searched for the plane's batteries, which the mechanic Roque had told them were in the tail section, and found them through a small hatch on the outside of the plane. They also found some sandwiches wrapped in plastic which were mouldy, but they unwrapped them and salvaged what was edible. Then they finished their meal with a spoonful of sugar mixed with chlorophyll toothpaste in half an inch of rum. Never in their lives had a pudding tasted so delicious.

The sun went behind the mountains and it began to grow cold. Canessa traced the wires which led from the batteries and attached them to a light bulb he had taken from the galley. He connected it but the bulb burst. He tried another, and this time it lit up. The three then climbed into the luggage compartment, blocked up the door with suitcases and clothes and lay back on the floor. After the cramped conditions back at the plane, it was delightfully warm and comfortable. At nine Canessa disconnected the bulb, and they slept.

The next morning it was snowing slightly, but they loaded up the Samsonite sledge and went on down the valley to the northeast. They could see an enormous mountain to their left and estimated that it might take them three days to walk round it to where the valley would turn to the west.

The snow stopped, the sky cleared, and towards eleven o'clock in the morning it began to get very hot. The sun beat down on their backs and was reflected up at their faces by the snow, and when they came to an outcrop of rock they decided to stop there and shelter from the sun. As they lay there they stared at the huge mountain ahead of them. Its size defied all calculation of its distance from where they were. The more Canessa studied what lay ahead, the more sceptical he became about their strategy. From what he could see, the valley continued to go east; thus every step they took, he thought, would take them further into the Andes. But he said nothing to the other two that afternoon.

They were tired and the sun was hot, but no sooner had it sunk behind the mountains to the west than the temperature plummeted. They therefore decided to spend the night where they were. They dug a hole in the snow to give themselves some protection and, once they were lying in it, covered themselves with the blankets they had

brought with them. But as the night continued the temperature sank lower and the three expeditionaries began to freeze

All were awake when the sun rose the next morning. "It's hopeless," said Canessa. "We won't survive another night like that."

Parrado stood up. "We've got to go on," he said. "They're counting on us."

"We'll be no use to them lying dead in the snow," Canessa pointed towards the mountain. "There isn't an opening. The valley doesn't go to the west. We're just walking further into the Andes."

Parrado looked to the northeast and saw little to encourage him. "Then what do you suggest we do?" he asked.

"Go back to the tail," said Canessa. "Take out the batteries and take them back up to the plane. Roque said that with the batteries we could make the radio work."

Parrado turned to Vizintín. "What do you think, Tintín?"

"I don't know. I'll go along with whatever you two decide"

Parrado became furious with Vizintín for his indecisiveness and insisted he come down on one side or the other. Eventually Vizintín sided with Canessa

They set off back towards the tail, and reached it by early afternoon. They were tempted to stay in the comfort of the luggage compartment, but their food supplies were running low and they decided to return to the Fairchild. Canessa and Vizintín climbed through the small hatch into the part of the plane where the batteries were stored, disconnected them and handed them out to Parrado.

The batteries were loaded onto the sledge and an attempt was made to pull it, but the batteries were so heavy it would not move. It was immediately apparent that to transport the batteries to the plane was not possible. They did not lose heart, however, because Canessa assured them that it would not be difficult to remove the radio from the pilots' cabin and bring it down to the tail.

Instead of the batteries, then, Canessa and Vizintín piled the sledge and filled their knapsacks with warm clothes for the other boys and thirty cartons of cigarettes, while Parrado went back to the galley and wrote above the sink in nail polish, "Go up. Eighteen people still alive."

THE SPIRITS OF THE BOYS they had left behind had risen in their absence. There was first of all the immense feeling of relief that at last something was being done about their rescue. They were all quite sure that their expeditionaries would find help. It was also more

comfortable in the plane now that they were gone. There was more space to sleep in and less tension without Canessa and Vizintín.

They all felt that they had been through a purifying experience. They thought of Christ's forty days in the desert, and since it was now nearly forty days since the plane had crashed they felt sure that their ordeal was about to end; as if to demonstrate that their suffering had indeed made better men of them, they tried harder than ever not to quarrel with one another and to be kind to all.

Certainly their quarrels were never serious when compared to the strong bond of their common purpose. Especially when they prayed together at night they felt an almost mystical solidarity, not only amongst themselves but with God. They had called to Him in their need and now felt Him close at hand.

Numa Turcatti, however, was bitterly disappointed that he had not been allowed to go on the expedition, and he turned his anger not on the others but on himself. He despised his own weakness and seemed to abandon his own body as a punishment for letting him down. He had always found the meat repulsive and had only eaten it to build up his strength for the expedition. Now all his repugnance returned. As a result, of course, he grew weak and was less able to resist the poison in his leg, and he took this as an excuse to do less and less for the group or for himself.

Rafael Echavarren was the reverse. His spirit remained strong but the afflictions of his body slowly showed themselves to be stronger still. His wounded leg was now black and yellow from gangrene, and one night he became delirious. "Who wants to come with me to the shops," he said, "to get some bread and Coca-Cola?" Then he shouted, "Papa, Papa, come in! We're in here."

Páez went up to him and said, "You can say what you like later, but now you're going to pray with me. 'Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee...'"

Echavarren's open, staring eyes turned towards Páez, and slowly his lips began to repeat the words of the prayer. For that short moment—the time it took them to say a Hail Mary and an Our Father—he was lucid. Then he returned to his incoherent raving. "Who'll come with me to the shops?"

"Not me, thanks," they shouted back, or "Let's wait until tomorrow." They were quite hardened to the horror of it all. Soon, however, his delirium ceased; all they could hear was the rasping sound of his laboured breathing. Later it quickened and then stopped. Páez performed artificial respiration for half an hour, but it



An expedition was mounted to take the aircraft's radio to the batteries in the severed tail plane. This photograph, taken by Vizintín, shows Canessa (left), Parrado and, searching in the tail plane, Harley.

was clear to the rest of them after a few minutes that Rafael Echavarren was dead.

The following evening they spotted the three figures of the returning expeditionaries. plodding and stumbling up the hill. They watched, their faces flaccid with expressions of bitter disappointment and deep despair.

Canessa came first, followed by Parrado and Vizintín. When he came within earshot they could hear his piercing voice shouting, "Hey, boys, we've found the tail . . . all the suitcases . . . clothes . . . and cigarettes," and when he reached the plane they clustered around him and heard what had happened. "We wouldn't have made it that way," said Canessa. "The valley doesn't turn; it goes east. But we've found the tail and the batteries. All we have to do is to get the radio and take it down there."

In the face of his forceful optimism the boys' spirits lifted. They wept and embraced and then clustered around the sledge to pick trousers, sweaters and socks, while Pancho Delgado took charge of the cigarettes.

Six

On the same day as the expedition left the Fairchild, Madelon Rodríguez and Estela Pérez flew to Chile. With them went Ricardo Echavarren, the father of Rafael; Juan Manuel Pérez, the brother of Marcelo; and Raul Rodríguez Escalada, the most experienced pilot of the Uruguayan National Airline and a cousin of Madelon.

On 18 November they reached Talca and began to explore. First they rented a plane and made several flights around the area. From the air they saw a piece of country which matched almost exactly the description which Croiset had given them. They flew back to Talca to hire guides and horses and then set off on horseback to return and explore it more closely. But they found nothing.

There were few now who had any faith in young Croiset, yet those who had at last lost faith in his clairvoyance had not lost faith in the survival of their sons. They turned increasingly to God.

On 5 December Rodríguez Escalada and a number of the boys' fathers met the commander in chief of the Uruguayan Air Force, Brigadier Pérez Caldas. Caldas delivered a report confirming that nothing could be done before February. That winter had seen the heaviest falls of snow in the Andes for the past thirty years. The plane

would be completely buried and there was no possibility of survival.

He turned to the eight men who faced him, expecting them to accept this assessment of the situation, but though in their hearts they all agreed that a search would be fruitless, they insisted that it must take place. They explained the state of mind of the mothers, and finally Caldas rose to his feet. "Gentlemen," he said, "You have made your request and I have made my decision. The Uruguayan Air Force will arrange for a plane to be at your disposal."

The final search was on its way.

AT SIX O'CLOCK ON THE MORNING OF 11 December, a Douglas C-47 of the Uruguayan Air Force took off for Santiago. Aboard were the pilot, Major Reuben Terra, a crew of four, and Páez Vilaró, Rodríguez Escalada, and the fathers of Canessa, Harley and Nicolich. Even at that early hour many parents had come to the airport to see them off.

The plane was a military transport. There were no comfortable seats inside, and the five middle-aged men had to sit on benches along the side. It was noisy too, but they were all quite content, because for the first time since the Fairchild had disappeared they had at their disposal the means to search among the highest peaks of the Andes. According to the Uruguayan press, the C-47 had been specially equipped for this expedition; at any rate, it had the oxygen and pressurization required for high-altitude flying.

As they flew over the estuary of the River Plate, however, the plane gave a sudden lurch and began to vibrate. One of the engines had died, and they were forced to make an emergency landing at the military airport of El Palomar, where Major Terra cabled to Montevideo for a new engine. His passengers were not willing to wait until it came and they hired a light aircraft to fly them to Ezeiza airport, where they caught a scheduled flight to Santiago. At the headquarters of the *Servicio Aéreo de Rescate* at Los Cerrillos they started to bargain for the use of one of the SAR's helicopters.

Commander Massa, though he listened politely to what they proposed, could not accept their suggestion. "You don't understand," he said. "It's extremely dangerous flying helicopters in the cordillera. I can't risk the lives of my pilots unless there's some concrete evidence that the wreck is in a specific place. If you have any evidence, give it to me and I'll act upon it, but until then . . . I'm sorry."

Seven

23 November was Bobby Francois's twenty-first birthday. He received as a present from his sixteen companions an extra packet of cigarettes. Meanwhile, Canessa and Parrado set about the task of removing the radio and the transmitter from the panel of instruments. Their only tools were a screwdriver, a knife and a pair of pliers, and with these, after several days of effort, they eventually extracted it.

Canessa was the most enthusiastic about the radio. Roy Harley, who was supposed to be their radio expert, was more doubtful. He knew best the limits of his own expertness, upon which they based their hopes—some odd afternoons fiddling around with the stereo set of a friend—and he insisted repeatedly that this in no way qualified him to reassemble a VHF radio.

The other boys discounted his diffidence and at last, with enormous reluctance, Roy agreed to go to the tail. The next morning a small column assembled for the descent. First came Vizintín, loaded with the shark's-fin antenna, removed from the roof of the plane above the pilots' cabin; then Harley; and finally Canessa and Parrado. They set off down the mountain, and the thirteen they left behind were delighted to see them go. Not only were they spared the bullying presence of Canessa but also they could dream again that rescue was at hand.

They were in no position, however, to sit back and wait for their dreams to come true. For the first time since they had taken their decision to eat the flesh of the dead, they were running short of supplies. The problem was not that sufficient bodies did not exist but that they could not find them; those who had died in the crash and had been left outside the plane were now, as a result of the avalanche, buried deep in the snow. One or two still remained of those who had been killed in the avalanche, but in deference to Javier's feelings they had agreed not to touch the body of Liliana Methol. Soon they would have to find the earlier victims.

They therefore set about searching for bodies. Carlitos Páez and Pedro Algorta were in charge of this operation, but most of the boys joined in. They dug shafts down into the snow on the spots where they remembered a body had lain, but often these holes would go frustratingly deep without anything coming to light. At the same time, the corpses that they had preserved nearer the surface began to

suffer from the stronger sun which melted the thin layer of snow which covered them. The thaw had truly set in—the level of snow had fallen far below the roof of the Fairchild—and the sun in the middle of the day was very hot. Added, then, to the labours of digging, cutting and snow-melting was that of covering the bodies with snow and then shielding them from the sun with sheets of plastic.

Many of the boys felt themselves too weak to do labour of this kind. Some had learned to live with their uselessness, but others did not admit to themselves that they made no contribution to the welfare of the group. Carlitos once rebuked Moncho Sabella for not doing any work, whereupon the enfeebled Moncho fell to digging a hole with such hysterical frenzy that his exertions led him to collapse with exhaustion. Moncho would have loved to be counted among the heroic organizers and expeditionaries, but his body betrayed him; he had no choice but to be one of the spectators.

As the division between the two groups, of workers and non-workers, grew wider, Coche Inciarte's role became more important. By performance and inclination, he was firmly in the camp of the parasites; on the other hand he had the kind of pure and witty character that it was impossible to dislike. Whether he was coaxing Carlitos to light a fire or dressing his dreadfully infected leg, he would always laugh and make others smile at what he was doing. His condition, like Turcatti's, was increasingly serious because both were reluctant to eat raw meat and, since fuel supplies were scarce, cooking was a rare luxury. Coche even became delirious at times, and told the boys that there was a little door in the side of the plane which led out into a green valley. Yet when he announced one morning, as Rafael Echavarren had done, that he was going to die that day, no one took him seriously. Next morning, when he woke again, they all laughed and said, "Well, Coche, what's it like to be dead?"

WHILE THESE DEVELOPMENTS were taking place in the plane, the three expeditionaries and Roy Harley had reached the tail. Their journey down had only taken one and a half hours, and on the way the boys had found a suitcase which had belonged to Parrado's mother, with sweets inside and two bottles of Coca-Cola.

They spent the rest of that first day at the tail resting and looking through the suitcases which had appeared from under the melting snow since they were last there. Among other things Parrado found a camera loaded with film, and his airline bag with the two bottles of

rum and liqueur which his mother had bought in Mendoza. They opened one of them but saved the other for the expedition they would have to make if they could not get the radio to work.

Canessa and Harley set about that task next morning. It seemed at first that it would not be difficult, because the sockets in the back of the transmitter were marked BAT and ANT to show where the wires to the batteries and antenna should be fixed. Unfortunately there were other wires whose connections were not so clear. Above all they could not make out which wires were positive and which negative, so often, when they made a connection, sparks flew into their eyes.

By the third day Harley and Canessa had made all the necessary connections between battery and radio and shark's-fin antenna but still could not pick up any signal on the earphones. They thought that perhaps the antenna was faulty, so they tore out strands of cable from the electrical circuits of the plane and linked them together, making an aerial more than sixty feet long. When they connected it to the transistor radio which they had brought with them, they could pick up many radio stations in Chile, Argentina and Uruguay. When they connected it to the Fairchild's radio, however, nothing came through at all. They therefore reconnected the transistor, found a programme which played some cheerful music, and went back to work.

In fact this attempt to call help with the plane's radio could never have succeeded. The transmitter required 115 volts AC, normally supplied by an inverter. The current supplied by the batteries was 24 volts DC.

Suddenly, on the transistor radio that they had attached to their antenna, the four of them heard a news bulletin in which it was announced that the search was to be resumed by a specially-equipped Douglas C-47 of the Uruguayan Air Force. They received the news in different ways. Harley was ecstatic with hope and joy. Canessa too looked relieved. Vizintín showed no particular reaction, while Parrado looked almost disappointed. "Don't get too optimistic," he warned the others. "Just because they're looking again doesn't mean they'll find us."

They decided, all the same, that it would be a good idea to make a large cross in the snow by the tail, and they did so with the suitcases that lay scattered all around. By now it was obvious that no more tinkering with the radio would make it work. They therefore made up their minds to return to the plane. Before they left, Harley—as an expression of all the misery and frustration he had felt in those eight

days—kicked to pieces the different components of the radio they had so painstakingly put together.

He was wrong to waste his energy. The 45-degree climb back up to the plane was almost a mile, the surface of the snow was mushy, and they either sank up to their thighs or had to strap on the cumbersome cushions that they used as snowshoes. It needed an almost superhuman effort, which poor Roy was not in a condition to provide. Though they rested every thirty paces, he soon lagged behind, but Parrado stayed with him—cajoling, cursing, begging him to come on. Finally, when they came to a slope of snow so steep that no effort of will could drive Roy to surmount it, Parrado gripped him with the enormous strength he still seemed to possess and hauled him up towards the Fairchild.

They reached the plane between half past six and seven in the evening. There was a cold wind blowing, with a slight flurry of snow. The thirteen had already gone inside, and they gave the expeditionaries a depressed reception. They had had no high hopes for the radio but when Roy and the expeditionaries told them that they had heard on their transistor that the search had been restarted, the boys were determined that this should not tempt the expeditionaries to abandon the idea of a further expedition. In fact they were impatient that the three should leave again almost immediately.

The news of the C-47, however, had produced in Canessa a certain reluctance to risk his life on the mountainside.

"It would be absurd for us to leave now," he said, "with the specially-equipped plane on its way to find us. We should give them at least ten days and then, perhaps, set out. It's crazy to risk our lives if it isn't necessary."

The others were thrown into a fury by this procrastination. They had not pampered Canessa and suffered his intolerable temper for so long only to be told by him that he was not going. Nor were they so optimistic that the C-47 would find them, for they heard on the transistor first that it had been forced to land in Buenos Aires, then that it had had to have its engines overhauled in Los Cerrillos. There was also the shortage of food to be considered.

Their arguments seemed to convince Canessa. Parrado did not need to be persuaded and Vizintín always went along with what the other two decided. They therefore set to work to prepare for the final expedition.

Towards the end of the first week in December, after fifty-six days on the mountain, two condors appeared in the sky and circled above



the seventeen survivors. These two enormous birds of prey, with bald heads and necks and a wingspan of nine feet, were the first sign of any life but their own that they had seen for eight weeks. The condors watched the movements of the human beings but never swooped on them, and after a few days they disappeared altogether. They were followed, however, by other signs of life. A bee flew into the fuselage and then out again; later still, one or two flies and finally a butterfly were seen around the plane.

It was now warm during the day, but by 10 December Canessa still insisted that the expedition was not ready to leave. Something



Some of the survivors rest in the sunshine that temporarily warms the snowy desolation of their mountain prison. Left to right: Páez, Fito Strauch, Parrado, Mangino, Javier Methol, Eduardo Strauch, Canessa and Algorta.

was to happen that day, however, which would make the boys' threats and admonitions superfluous.

Numa Turcatti had been getting weaker every day. As he grew weaker he grew more listless, and bothered less about feeding himself, which in its turn made him weaker still until he had practically become a skeleton. Like Coche Inciarte he was intermittently delirious, but on the night of 10 December he slept peacefully.

In the morning, however, he was in a coma. Delgado, who had been looking after him, went immediately to the side of his friend.

Numa lay there with his eyes open, but he seemed unaware of Delgado's presence. His breathing was slow and laboured. Delgado knelt beside him and began to say the rosary. As he prayed, the breathing stopped.

TURCATTI'S DEATH ACHIEVED what argument and exhortation had failed to achieve: it persuaded Canessa that they could wait no longer. Roy Harley, Coche Inciarte and Moncho Sabella were all weak and incipiently delirious. A day's delay could mean the difference between their death and their survival. It was therefore agreed by all that the expedition should set off the next day, due west to Chile.

They could not know that only five miles to the east of the Fairchild there was a road and a hotel which, though closed, was stocked with huge supplies of tinned food.

At five o'clock the next morning, Canessa, Parrado and Vizintín prepared to go. First they dressed themselves in the clothes they had picked from the luggage of the forty-five passengers and crew.

Next to his skin Parrado wore a T-shirt and a pair of woollen women's slacks. On top of these he wore three pairs of jeans and six sweaters. Next he put on the hood and shoulders that he had cut from Susana's fur coat, and finally a jacket. Under his rugby boots he wore four pairs of socks.

Vizintín had covered his collection of sweaters and jeans with a mackintosh and, as before, he also carried the heaviest load, including a third of the meat packed in plastic supermarket bags. The whole supply was designed to last the three of them ten days.

Canessa carried the sleeping bag which they had made from insulating material taken from the tail section: warm and yet lightweight, the insulation had been sewn into a large sack. He had also chosen each garment so that it had something precious about it. One of the sweaters he wore had been given to him by his mother, another by a dear friend, and a third had been knitted for him by his *novia*, Laura Surraco. One pair of trousers had belonged to his closest friend, Daniel Maspons.

The Strauch cousins gave the expeditionaries some breakfast before they sent them on their way. The others watched in silence. No words could express what they felt at this awesome moment; they all knew that their last chance of survival depended on the three. Once again Parrado separated the pair of tiny red shoes that he had bought in Mendoza for his nephew. He put one in his pocket and

hung the other from the hat rack in the plane. "I'll be back to get it," he said. "Don't worry."

Then they embraced, and amid cries of, "*Hasta luego!*" the three expeditionaries set off up the mountain.

After they had gone about five hundred yards, Pancho Delgado came hobbling out of the plane.

"Wait," he shouted, waving a small statue in his hand. "you've forgotten the Virgin of Lujan!"

Canessa stopped. "Don't worry!" he shouted back. "If she wants to stay, let her stay. We'll go with God in our hearts."

They climbed up the valley, then took a reading on the plane's spherical compass and started due west up the side of the mountain. It was very heavy going. Not only were they faced with the steep slope, but the snow had already started to melt and even in their improvised snowshoes they sank up to their knees. But they persevered, and by the time they stopped by an outcrop of rock for lunch at midday, they were already very high. Beneath them they could still see the Fairchild, with some of the boys sitting on the seats in the sun watching their progress.

After the meal and a short rest they continued on their way. Their plan was to reach the top before dark, and as they climbed their minds were on the view they hoped to have on the other side—a view of small hills and green valleys, perhaps with a shepherd's hut or a farmhouse already in sight. As they had already found out, however, distances in the snow were deceptive, and by the time the sun went behind the mountain they were still nowhere near the top. Realizing that somehow they would have to sleep on the mountainside, they started to look for a level surface. To their growing dismay, it seemed that there was none. The mountain was almost vertical, but a little further on they came to an immense boulder, beside which the wind had blown a trench in the snow. The floor of the trench was not horizontal, but the wall of snow would prevent them from slipping down the mountainside; they therefore pitched camp and climbed into their sleeping bag.

It was a perfectly clear night and the temperature had sunk to many degrees below freezing, but the sleeping bag succeeded in keeping them warm. They also ate some more and drank a mouthful each of the rum they had brought with them. The view from where they lay was magnificent, a huge landscape of snow-covered mountains lit by the pale light of the moon and stars. They felt strange lying there—Canessa in the middle—half-possessed by terror

and despair, yet half marvelling at the magnificence of this icy beauty before them. At last they slept.

When the sun came up from behind the mountains opposite them they started to climb once again—Parrado first, followed by Canessa and then Vizintín. All three were still tired and the mountain now was so steep that Vizintín did not dare look down. He simply followed Canessa at a cautious distance, as Canessa followed Parrado. What frustrated them all was that each summit they saw above them turned out to be a false one, a ridge of snow or an outcrop of rocks. They stopped by one of these rocks to eat in the middle of the day, took a short rest and then climbed on. By the middle of the afternoon they still had not reached the top of the mountain—and though they felt themselves to be near, they were afraid of making the same mistake as the night before. They therefore looked for and found a similar trench carved by the wind beside the same kind of rock, and decided to stop there.

When now they sat down in the sleeping bag and waited for the sunset, Canessa said, "I think we should go back."

"Go back?" Parrado repeated.

"Yes," said Canessa. "Go back. This mountain's much too high. We'll never reach the top. With every step we take we risk our lives. It's madness to go on."

"And what do we do if we go back?" asked Parrado. "To the west is Chile, we know that for certain. If we keep going to the west, we're sure to come to Chile."

"If we keep going to the west, we're sure to break our necks."

Parrado sighed.

"Well, I'm going back anyway," said Canessa.

"And I'm going on," said Parrado.

They slept that night with their differences unresolved. As soon as it was light Parrado prepared himself to continue the climb. Canessa seemed less sure that he was going to return to the Fairchild, so he made the suggestion that Parrado and Vizintín leave their knapsacks with him and climb a little further up the mountain to see if they came to the top. Parrado accepted this idea and set off at once, but in his impatience to reach the summit he climbed quickly and Vizintín was soon left behind.

The ascent had become exceptionally difficult. The wall of snow was almost vertical and Parrado could only proceed by digging steps for hands and feet. Then suddenly the sheer face was no longer so steep. It fell sharply to a slight incline and then flattened out onto a

level surface some twelve feet wide, before falling away on the other side. He was at the top of the mountain.

Parrado's joy at having climbed it lasted for only the few seconds it took to scramble to his feet; the view before him was not of green valleys running down towards the Pacific Ocean, but an endless expanse of snow-covered mountains. From where he stood, nothing blocked the view of the vast cordillera, and for the first time Parrado felt that they were finished. He sank to his knees and wanted to curse and cry to heaven at the injustice, but no sound came from his mouth.

Then, as he studied the mountains spread out before him, he came to notice that due west, to the far left of the panorama, there were two mountains whose peaks were not covered with snow. "The cordillera must end somewhere," he said to himself, "so perhaps those two are in Chile." This idea renewed his optimism, and when he heard Vizintín calling him from below, he shouted down to him in a buoyant tone of voice, "Go back and fetch Muscles. Tell him it's all going to be all right. Tell him to come up and see for himself!"

Reluctantly Canessa left his knapsack with Vizintín, and followed the steps cut into the snow until he too stood on the top of the mountain. The effect of what he saw was the same on Canessa as it had been on Parrado. He looked aghast at the endless mountains stretching away to the west. "But we've absolutely had it," he said. "There isn't a chance in hell of getting through all that."

"But look," said Parrado. "Look there to the west. Don't you see? To the left? Two mountains without any snow?"

"But they're miles away. It'll take us fifty days to get to them."

"Fifty days? Do you think so? But look there." Parrado pointed into the middle distance. "If we go down this mountain and along that valley, it leads to that sort of Y. Now, one branch of the Y must lead to the two mountains."

Canessa followed the line of Parrado's arm, saw the valley, and saw the Y. "Maybe," he said. "But it'd still take us fifty days, and we've only enough food for ten."

"I know," said Parrado, "but I've thought of something. Why don't we send Tintin back?"

"I'm not sure he'd want to go."

"He'll go if we tell him to. Then we can keep his food. If we ration it out carefully, it should last us for twenty days instead of ten."

"And after that?"

"After that we'll find some."

"I don't know," said Canessa. "I think I'd rather go back."

"Then go back," said Parrado sharply. "But I'm going on."

They retraced their steps down the mountain. When they reached Vizintín, Canessa said to him, in the most casual tone of voice he could muster, "Hey, Tintin, Nando thinks it might be best if you went back to the plane. You see, it would give us more food."

"Go back?" said Vizintín, his face lighting up. "Sure. If you think so."

"You don't mind? We could split up tomorrow morning."

"Mind? No. Anything you say."

"And when you get back," said Canessa, "tell the others that we've gone west. And if the plane spots you and you get rescued, please don't forget about us."

The three spent a restless night. Next morning, Vizintín strapped on his knapsack and then took off his prized woollen balaclava and gave it to Canessa. "Well, good luck," he said.

"Same to you," said Parrado. "Take care going down."

"I certainly will," said Vizintín. He embraced his two companions and set off down the mountain.

THE THIRTEEN BOYS who remained in the Fairchild had watched the progress of the three expeditionaries up the mountain through their homemade sunglasses. It was easy to follow them on the first day, but by the second they had become just specks on the snow. What depressed the spectators was the slow progress they were making. They had thought that it would only take a morning, or at most a day, to climb to the summit, yet on the morning of the second day the expeditionaries were barely halfway up. By the afternoon of the second day, they reached a band of shale and disappeared from view.

There was nothing more they could do for the expeditionaries but pray for them. Then, on the third day, 14 December, they heard on the radio that the Uruguayan C-47 had found a cross on something called the Santa Elena mountain. Their spirits soared at this news, for what other cross could have been found but their own, down by the Fairchild's tail? They thought that the Santa Elena mountain must be the mountain behind them, and for the rest of the morning they waited for the rescue they believed to be imminent, Fernández with the radio always pressed to his ear. He heard that the Chilean and Argentinian planes had joined the Uruguayan C-47 in the search and that the Argentinian authorities were investigating the cross, which was thought to be on their territory.

While Fernández was listening in this way to the radio, Methol brought out the small statue of Saint Elena which Lihana had had among her belongings. Along with some other boys he prayed to that patron saint of lost things, and many of them promised that if ever they had daughters they would call them Elena.

All that day they waited for the helicopters and suddenly, around midday, they heard them from the other side of the mountains. They embraced and jumped in the air, but their celebrations were premature. The sound they had heard degenerated into a rumble and then disappeared. What they had taken to be the sound of helicopters had been the noise of an avalanche.

When evening came they returned to the plane, bitterly disappointed. Their thoughts became more sober. What plane had flown over them that could have seen the cross they had made? And if they had been found, why were there no helicopters?

ON THE MORNING OF 15 DECEMBER, those boys who were sitting on the seats laid out in front of the plane suddenly saw something hurtling at tremendous speed down the side of the mountain. They thought at first it was a boulder dislodged by the melting snow, but as it came closer they saw it was Vizintín. He seemed to be falling, yet his descent was controlled, for he was sitting on a cushion and using it as a toboggan. When he drew level with the plane he dug his feet into the snow and came to a stop.

After Vizintín had reached them he explained what had happened. "It took us three days to get up there," he said, "though with my toboggan I've got down very quickly. The climb was hell. Nando and Muscles got to the top—they're going on, but they sent me back, to make the food last longer."

"But what's on the other side?" they all asked, clustering around him.

"More mountains . . . mountains as far as you can see. Myself, I don't think they've got much chance." He paused, and then added, "And the funny thing is that there's less snow to the east"—he pointed down the valley—"than there is to the west."

The Strauchs shook their heads. "But that's impossible. Chile is to the west."

AS THE DAYS PASSED only bad news came over the radio. The cross that had been found on a mountain was not theirs but the work of a team of Argentinian geophysicists from Mendoza. Twenty cones had

been buried in the snow in the shape of an X. By photographing it from the air at regular intervals, the scientists could gauge the speed with which the snow was melting in the mountains and, from that, the amount of water that could be expected to pour down into the arid valleys of Argentina.

As a result the helicopters of the SAR were grounded once again. Only the Uruguayan C-47 was continuing the search.

Then, one afternoon, they heard the drone of engines in the sky. Once again—as when they had heard about the cross—they were thrown into paroxysms of excitement and fell to shouting and praying until, to their horror, the sound of the plane grew fainter.

Then they were absolutely silent, standing in the snow and straining their ears to catch the slightest sound. The drone grew louder again, then fainter, then louder still. They could not see it but they deduced from the sound that it was flying over the area in parallel lines. At once they prepared all their brightest garments and—realizing that the plane would be more likely to spot movement of some kind—practised an entire routine whereby the healthiest would run around in two circles while the lame would stand in a line waving up into the sky.

They waited until evening, the sounds of the plane's engines getting closer all the time; and when it grew dark and there was no longer any sound from the sky, they went to bed happy to think that it would almost certainly resume its search where it had left off the day before. The next morning they heard on the radio that the Uruguayan C-47 had developed engine trouble yet again and was grounded in Santiago.

It had now been a week since Canessa and Parrado had left them, and in less than a week it would be Christmas Day. The thought that they were now almost certain to spend Christmas on the mountain was deeply depressing. They would talk together about anything except their homes and their families; but on the evening of 20 December the two Strauchs and Daniel Fernández could not stop themselves from thinking of the Christmases of earlier years that they had all celebrated so beautifully together, and for the first time in many days hot tears began to roll down the cheeks not just of Eduardo and Daniel but of Fito as well.

AFTER VIZINTÍN HAD LEFT THEM, Canessa and Parrado decided to spend the whole of that day resting near the top of the mountain. The three-day climb had left them exhausted, and they knew that

they would need all their strength to reach the top again and then go down the other side.

At nine in the morning on Saturday, 16 December, Parrado and Canessa set off once again for the summit. The air at that height was very rarified; their hearts beat fast and after every three steps they would have to pause, clinging to the precipitous wall of snow.

It took them three hours to reach the top. There they rested and looked over the other side for the best way down. There was considerably less snow, the valley they were making for was quite clear, but one way down looked as good as another, so they chose a path at random and set off. Mostly they slid down the mountainside on their backs, sending small avalanches of grey stones cascading down for, while the sides of the mountain were not sheer, they were very steep and often made up not of solid rock but of shale.

At four in the afternoon they came to a large flat rock, and decided that they had better stop there and dry out their clothes before dark. They estimated that they were about two thirds of the way down the mountain. They took off their socks to dry them in the evening sun, and when the sun had set they got into the sleeping bag and slept on the rock. It was not so cold that night, but it was particularly uncomfortable.

They awoke the next morning at first light, but waited in the sleeping bag until the rays of the sun were upon them before setting off again. It was the sixth day of their journey, and at midday they reached the bottom of the mountain. They found themselves where they had planned to be—at the entrance to the valley which led to the Y. Its surface was covered with snow, which at this time of day was mushy and deep, so they had to wear their snowshoes.

Soon after they had started down the valley, Canessa's strength began to fail him. Whenever the intrepid Parrado looked back, he would see Canessa sitting on the snow. He would shout to him to come on, and slowly Canessa would get to his feet and plod after him. As he walked he would pray. Every step became a word of the Lord's Prayer. Parrado's mind was less on his Father in heaven than his father on earth. He knew how his father must be suffering.

As it came to the late afternoon, they decided to pitch camp on the snow. The sun had gone behind the mountains and it had started to get cold, so they climbed into their sleeping bag and warmed themselves with a drink of the rum they carried with them. Then they lay looking down the valley which was their path to freedom, wondering what would face them the next day.

From where they lay they could see the end of the valley which was the Y they had been making for. Both suddenly noticed that while the sun had left them, it still shone on the mountain on the further side of the Y. They watched this phenomenon with growing excitement, for since the sun set in the west, if it continued to illuminate that mountainside late into the evening it must mean that no other mountain stood in its way. It was not until nine at night that the reddish rock streaked with snow fell into shadow, and Canessa and Parrado slept that night with the firm knowledge that one arm of the Y lay open to the west.

The next morning, after their usual breakfast, they started out full of optimism, but once again Parrado drew ahead, spurred on by his curiosity to see what lay at the end of the valley. Canessa could not keep up. Little of his strength had returned with the night's rest. When Parrado stopped and turned to call to him to hurry, he shouted back that he was tired and could not go on.

"Think about something else," said Parrado. "Distract yourself from the walking."

Canessa began to imagine that he was walking down the streets of Montevideo, and when Parrado called to him once again to hurry, Canessa replied, "I can't hurry. I'll miss some of the shop windows."

They walked on, and slowly the sound of their feet cushioned on the snow, which had been all that broke the silence, was superseded by a roaring noise which grew louder and louder as they approached the end of the valley. Panic entered the hearts of both of them. What if an impassable torrent now blocked their way? Parrado walked faster, obsessed with curiosity. He drew two hundred yards ahead of Canessa and then suddenly found himself at the end of the valley.

The view which met his eyes was of paradise. The snow stopped. From under its white shell there poured forth a torrent of grey water which flowed with tremendous force into a gorge and tumbled over boulders and stones to the west. And more beautiful still, everywhere he looked there were patches of green—moss, grass, gorse bushes, yellow and purple flowers.

As Parrado stood there, his face wet with tears of joy, Canessa came up behind him and exclaimed with delight at the sight of this blessed valley. Then both boys staggered forward off the snow and sank onto rocks by the side of the river. There, amid birds and lizards, they prayed aloud to God, thanking Him with all the fervour of their youthful hearts.

For more than an hour they rested in the sun, and as if it were

indeed the Garden of Eden the birds they had not seen for so long perched close to them on the rocks, quite unalarmed by the apparition of these two bearded, emaciated human beings.

They were confident now that they were saved, but they still had to press on. Though there was no snow, the going was not easy and they had to walk on rough rocks and climb over boulders the size of armchairs. At midday they stopped to eat. Then they decided to ford the river. That in itself was no easy task, as the current flowed with such force that it carried huge boulders with it. Still, there was a rock in the centre of the stream high enough to stand out above the water, and they decided that they could cross by leaping from the bank onto this rock and from the rock onto the opposite shore.

Canessa went first. Then Parrado, when he saw that his companion was safe, took the sleeping bag and threw it with all his force to the other bank. It fell short, crashing against the rocks by the side of the river. Canessa had to climb down to the water's edge to retrieve it, getting soaked by the spray.

Parrado threw over the rest of the gear and then joined him, but since so many of their clothes were wet they walked only a little further. Finding an overhanging shelf of rock, they decided to camp under it for the night. The sun still shone and they laid out their wet possessions to dry. Then they settled back on their cushions, watched by a large number of curious lizards.

That night was warmer than any thus far. They slept well and in the morning set out on the eighth day of their journey through the Andes. There were now trees to be seen in the distance, and in the middle of the morning Canessa thought he saw a group of cows grazing on the mountainside.

The sight, imagined or not, of those distant beasts helped their spirits to remain strong and optimistic just at the time when their bodies—above all, Canessa's—were suffering increasingly from the effort that had been demanded of them. The horizon might be green but the intermediate terrain was no easier than it had ever been; they still had to leap from one wobbling boulder to another, or stride on their frail ankles over the rocks and pebbles on the riverbank.

Then suddenly they came upon a most tangible sign of civilization—an empty soap tin. Canessa clutched it in his hand. "Look, Nando," he said. "It means people have been here."

Parrado was more cautious. "It might have fallen from a plane."

They set off yet again down the valley. More evidence followed. As they rounded one of the many outcrops that jutted out into the

valley, they suddenly came within a hundred yards of the cows that Canessa had seen from a distance that morning.

Even now Parrado was cautious. "Are you sure they aren't wild cows?" he asked Canessa.

"Wild cows? You don't get wild cows in the Andes. I tell you, Nando, that somewhere quite close to here we'll find the owner of those cows, or some man who's looking after them."

A little further down the valley they found a shelter for cattle, made of branches and brushwood which the two boys immediately recognized as excellent fuel for a fire. They decided to stop there for the night and cook the last of their food, and now that rescue seemed so certain they allowed themselves to think of things that until then had been too painful to contemplate. Canessa told Parrado about his *novia*, Laura Surraco, and Parrado in turn told Roberto about the girls he had known before the crash and how he envied him his steady girlfriend. As the fire died down the two boys fell asleep.

When they awoke next morning the cows had disappeared. This did not alarm them and they set off again, expecting to find around every outcrop of rock the house of a Chilean peasant. As the morning wore on, however, the valley continued much as it had been. Canessa was increasingly exhausted. His whole body ached, and all his will had to be used to put one foot in front of the other—and when he stopped or fell behind, Parrado's curses and insults would urge him on again.

The river was wider here, for every now and then smaller rivulets would descend from the mountains on either side. In the late afternoon they reached a corral with stone walls and a gate. In the middle there was a post driven into the ground, which was used for tying horses. Both boys felt their optimism return, but Canessa's physical condition had so deteriorated that it could not be restored by such a simple tonic as renewed hope. He staggered as he walked, and had to lean on Parrado's arm, and they agreed that they would stay there the night. It was in the minds of both of them that Canessa might have to stay longer.

While Parrado went in search of wood for a fire, and to see if by any chance there was some human habitation quite near to where they were, Canessa lay back under the trees. The ground was covered with fresh grass, the mountains rose up behind them, and the sound of the river could be heard from several hundred yards away where it crashed down through the gorge.

Canessa looked vacantly towards the other side of the river. The

setting sun gave long shadows to the trees and boulders at the foot of the mountain, which made them seem to move and change shape. Then suddenly, from out of these shadows, there came a moving shape large enough to be a man on a horse.

Canessa immediately tried to get to his feet, but even in his excitement his legs would hardly move, so he shouted to Parrado. "Nando, Nando! Look, there's a man, a man on a horse! On the other side of the river!"

Parrado started to run towards the river. "Where?" he said. "Where's the man on the horse?"

To his great dismay, when Canessa looked again over the roaring torrent to the spot where he had seen the rider, he saw only a tall rock and its lengthening shadow.

"I'm sure it was a man," he said. "I swear it. A man on a horse."

Parrado shook his head. "There's no one there now."

They had both faced back towards their camp when suddenly, over the splashing thunder of the river, they heard the sound of a human cry. They turned and there, on the other bank, they saw not one but three men on horses. They were staring at them, while herding three cows along a narrow path which ran between the river and the mountain.

Immediately the two boys began to wave their arms and shout, but the noise of the river was such that their words did not seem to carry to the further bank. Indeed, the interest the horsemen seemed to show in them was almost cursory, and it began to look as if they would ride on.

Parrado sank to his knees and joined his hands in a gesture of supplication. The horsemen hesitated. One of them reined in his horse and shouted some words across the gorge, the only one of which they could decipher was "tomorrow". Then the three rode on, herding the cows in front of them.

Parrado and Canessa stumbled back to their camp. Parrado was exhausted too, and Canessa could not walk unaided. The one word they had heard, however, was enough to give them enormous hope. At last they had made contact with other men.

In spite of their exhaustion they found it difficult to sleep. They were too excited.

THE SUN ROSE ON THE TENTH DAY of their journey through the Andes. At six both boys were awake, and looking across to the other side of the river they saw the smoke of a fire and a man standing beside it.

Next to him there were two other men, both still sitting on their horses. Parrado ran once again towards the edge of the gorge and climbed down to the bank of the river. The peasant did the same until they were only separated by the thirty-five yards of the torrent itself.

Though they were now closer, the noise of the cascading water was even louder than before and there was no question of speaking to one another, but the peasant had come prepared. He took a piece of paper, wrote on it, wrapped it round a stone and threw it across the river.

Parrado stumbled over the rocks, picked up this missive, and unwrapped it. There he read: *There is a man coming later. Tell me what you want.*

Parrado immediately gestured to the opposite bank that he had nothing with which to write; whereupon the peasant took his own ballpoint pen, wrapped it, with a stone, in a blue and white checked handkerchief, and threw it across the river.

When Parrado had this he sat down and feverishly wrote the following message: *I come from a plane that fell in the mountains. I am Uruguayan. We have been walking for ten days. I have a friend up there who is injured. In the plane there are still fourteen injured people. We have to get out of here quickly and we don't know how. We don't have any food. We are weak. When are you going to come and fetch us? Please. We can't even walk. Where are we?*

He wrapped the piece of paper round the stone, and the stone in the handkerchief. Then he threw it back over the river.

Parrado watched and prayed as the Chilean peasant unwrapped and then read the message. At last he looked up and signalled that he understood. Then he took from his pocket a piece of bread, threw it across the river, waved once again, and turned to climb back up the side of the gorge.

Parrado walked back towards Canessa, clutching the bread in his hands, a tangible sign that they had finally made contact with the outside world.

"Look," he said to Canessa when he reached him, "look what I've got."

Canessa fixed his tired eyes on the bread.

"We're saved," he said.

"Yes," said Parrado, "we're saved."

It was Thursday, 21 December, seventy days since the Fairchild had crashed in the Andes.

Eight

The C-47 of the Uruguayan Air Force left Santiago for Montevideo on the afternoon of Wednesday, 20 December, with three passengers— the fathers of Canessa, Harley and Nicolich—but while approaching Malargue in Argentina it once again gave the familiar lurch which went with the failure of one of the engines

The pilots had no choice but to make an emergency landing at the airport of San Rafael, about one hundred and eighty-five miles south of Mendoza. There, in this small Argentinian town, the fathers spent the night.

The next morning they were told by mechanics at the airport that the plane could not be repaired without parts from Montevideo. At this point the three men were inclined to find some other means to continue their journey, but there was a factor which made them hesitate—the two Uruguayan pilots who had charge of the C-47. Both men had been friends of Ferradas and Lagurara, the Fairchild's pilots, and while they had long since lost hope for their lives, they thought that by discovering the cause of the accident they might save their honour. They were depressed, quite naturally, by the continual breakdowns of the C-47, and it was to support and encourage them that Harley and Nicolich decided to wait there until the plane was repaired. Canessa, on the other hand, had promised to get home for Christmas, and he discovered that a bus left San Rafael for Buenos Aires that evening. At eight o'clock the doctor embraced his two friends and set off for Buenos Aires.

THAT SAME AFTERNOON, Páez Vilaró and Rodríguez Escalada had driven from Santiago to Pudahuel airport to catch their plane home to Montevideo. Just as Páez Vilaró made his way through the passport control and customs barriers, over the airport's loudspeaker system came the words, "This is the international police. Detain Carlos Páez Vilaró."

He turned to the policeman who stood nearest to him and said, "I am Carlos Páez Vilaró."

He was led away across the wide foyer of the airport to a telephone.

"Carlos? Is that you?" It was Colonel Morel, the commander in San Fernando.

"Yes, it's me," said Páez Vilaró, in a tone of mild irritation. "And

I appreciate you calling me like this to say goodbye, but the plane is waiting for me . . . I'll see you after Christmas."

"OK," said Morel, "I'm sorry to keep you. It's just that I thought that since you've been looking for those boys of yours for so long, you might like to come and see them."

Blinded by tears, Páez Vilaró rushed out onto the tarmac. The engines of the plane had already started; they were only waiting for him to climb the steps before pulling them away.

In a moment Rodríguez Escalada was at his side, and the two weeping Uruguayans fell into each other's arms, shouting to the skies, "They're alive, they're alive!"

AT MIDNIGHT IN SAN RAFAEL, the fathers of Harley and Nicolich were in touch with Montevideo. They were told that a note had been handed to the police in San Fernando purporting to come from a survivor from the Uruguayan plane crash. Without waiting to collect any of their luggage, which was locked up in the C-47 in the airport at San Rafael, the two men set off for Mendoza. They reached it at four in the morning and went straight to the military airfield. They had no money, but when they explained what had happened, the officers of the Argentine Air Force promised them a ride on the next plane that went to Chile.

For the rest of that night they sat waiting and at eight in the morning a plane landed with a cargo of refrigerated meat bound for Santiago. Half an hour later it took off again with Harley and Nicolich on board.

THAT SAME MORNING DR. CANESSA arrived in Buenos Aires. He had spent the night sitting in the bus and thought that before continuing his journey to Montevideo he would go to the home of a friend, to wash and perhaps rest a little. He left the bus station, hailed a taxi, and slumped in the back seat as it rattled along the streets of the city.

The radio was playing some music which was suddenly interrupted. The news came over the radio that two survivors from the Uruguayan Fairchild that had crashed in the Andes on 13 October had been found in a place called Los Maitenes on the River Azufre in the province of Colchagua. Their names were Fernando Parrado and Roberto Canessa.

On hearing this last word, tears poured down Dr. Canessa's cheeks, and with a cry of happiness this strong middle-aged man turned and embraced the bewildered taxi driver.

Nine

Canessa and Parrado, the two expeditionaries, had been taken to the mountain hut of a Chilean peasant, Armando Serda, where they ate cheese and beans as they had never eaten before, and then were invited to take a siesta. When they awoke it was seven in the evening. They came out of the wooden hut into the valley, lit by the mellow light of evening, and breathed into their lungs the warm air scented with flowers and vegetation. Armando and a second peasant, Enrique, were waiting for them and with shy sympathy understood at once what the two Uruguayans required. Though their larder was now almost exhausted, they brought out milk and more cheese.

As Canessa and Parrado devoured this evening meal, roasting the cheese on the fire, they questioned the two peasants and discovered that a third man, Sergio, had gone for the police at the nearest post, in Puente Negro. The boys contained their impatience with difficulty. With their own stomachs filled, their thoughts had returned to their fourteen friends. They thought not only of their morale but of Roy and Coche and Moncho, whose state of health had been so bad ten days before. Every extra hour that they waited could mean the difference between life and death.

Suddenly there was a shout from further down the valley. The two boys leaped to their feet. Parrado rushed to the entrance of the cottage, and Canessa hobbled after him. Ten mounted carabineers were to be seen riding up the valley with peaked caps and greatcoats and ropes hanging from their saddles. Behind them rode Sergio Catalan, the man to whom Parrado had thrown the note.

The captain of the carabineers questioned Parrado and Canessa about the whereabouts of the plane. He asked if they thought it could be reached on foot, but when he had heard just an outline of their journey through the Andes he realized that it would not be possible. He therefore detailed two of his men to return to Puente Negro and summon a helicopter from Santiago, which could be expected soon after sunrise.

By now the evening light had faded, and Canessa and Parrado settled down to talk to the carabineers—to tell them the incredible story of what had happened to the Fairchild. Later the carabineers emptied out their packs and pouches and Canessa and Parrado began their third feast of the day, almost cleaning out the entire supply of the platoon of carabineers. After food, however, their

appetite was for conversation, and the carabineers were happy to listen.

When Canessa and Parrado came out of the hut next day they saw to their dismay that they were in the middle of a fog bank. Enrique, Armando and the captain were all looking with equal disappointment at the thick mist.

"They won't find us in this," said the captain.

"Wait," said Catalan. "It's a morning mist. It won't last for ever."

The two boys sat down to a breakfast prepared by Enrique and Armando. Their disappointment at the further delay in the rescue of their friends did not diminish their enjoyment of yet another taste of normal food, and they ate stale bread and drank instant coffee with great relish. As they were coming to the end of this breakfast they heard a strange noise in the distance, like the twittering of a menagerie. Then, as it grew louder, they realized that the sounds were the cries of a crowd of human beings.

They looked down the valley in the direction of Puente Negro. Approaching them along the path came a column of men in city clothes, panting, stumbling, bowed under the weight of briefcases and cameras of every description. From this approaching horde there came cries of "Los Maitenes?" and "The survivors, where are the survivors?" until the first to reach the cottage saw at once, from their long hair, thin faces and beards, which were the men they had come to see.

"*El Mercurio*, Santiago," said one, pad and pencil in his hand.

"The BBC, London," said another, one hand thrusting a microphone under their noses, the other fumbling at the controls of a portable tape recorder. Suddenly they were surrounded by fifty jostling, jabbering journalists.

Canessa and Parrado were completely bowled over. From the limited experience of their lives they had been unable to foresee the appetite for sensation which had brought this pack in taxis and private cars along the narrow road from Santiago and then made them walk for two and a half hours, loaded with film and television cameras, along a narrow, dangerous mule path. Canessa and Parrado, however, were quite happy to answer their questions—omitting one or two details, notably those about what they had eaten to stay alive.

In the middle of this impromptu press conference three helicopters of the Chilean Air Force dropped out of the cloud and landed on the far side of the river. Commanders Carlos García and Jorge Massa, who had directed the original search for the Uruguayan aircraft,



On the day after their arrival at Los Maitenes, Canessa (riding behind a Chilean peasant) and Parrado (riding behind a carabineer) are photographed by press cameramen.

were piloting the first two helicopters. They brought with them Colonel Morel, a doctor, a medical orderly, and three members of the Andean Rescue Corps

It took a very short time to establish that the two emaciated, bearded figures were indeed the survivors from the Fairchild One—Canessa—was still suffering from exhaustion, and the doctor and his assistant set to work to listen to his heart and massage his aching limbs. The other, Parrado, refused such medical attention and at once began to badger García to take off again for the Fairchild. García told him that because of the fog it was impossible. He questioned him, however, about the position of the Fairchild.

"Have you any idea how high the plane is?" asked García.

"Not really, no," said Parrado. "Pretty high, I should say. There were no trees or plants of any sort."

"What did you eat?"

"Oh, we had some cheese, and things like that."

"Can you remember if there was any reading on the plane's altimeter?"

"Yes," said Canessa. "Seven thousand feet."

"Seven thousand feet? Good. That shouldn't be too difficult. Do you think we'll find it easily?"

Canessa and Parrado looked at each other. "Not too easily," said Parrado. "I'll come with you, if you like, and show you the way."

They waited for the fog to lift. Meanwhile, many of the journalists set off to return to Santiago and file their stories. Then, three hours after he had arrived, García decided that the visibility had sufficiently improved for two of the three helicopters to take off again. It was by now about one o'clock, the worst possible time of day for flying in the Andes. Because of this, García and Massa did not think that they would evacuate the fourteen boys on that flight but would merely establish where they were. Parrado was an excellent guide. He looked down through the windows of the helicopter and recognized all those spots on the valley where they had walked, and when they came to the Y he directed García to turn to the right and follow the narrower, snow-covered valley into the mountains.

THE NIGHT OF WEDNESDAY, 20 DECEMBER had seen the spirits of the fourteen boys left on the mountain at their lowest ebb. It was nine days since the expeditionaries had left them—six since Vizintín had come back from the top of the mountain. They all knew what rations they had taken with them. They all knew therefore, that time was running out.

The next morning they listened to the news on the radio and there was no mention of any rescue. On the contrary, it was announced that the C-47 of the Uruguayan Air Force had left Chile on Wednesday, so they set about their duties in the same pessimistic mood as the day before.

The next morning, as usual, Daniel Fernández and Eduardo Strauch went out at half past seven and tuned in to Montevideo to listen to the news. The first thing they heard was that two men purporting to be survivors from the Uruguayan Fairchild had been found in a remote valley of the Andes. They began to tune into other stations, and suddenly the whole air seemed to be alive with the news that two survivors from the Uruguayan plane that had crashed in the Andes ten weeks before had been found, that fourteen still remained alive at the scene of the crash, and that their rescue was under way. All the boys clustered round the radio to hear with their own ears the extraordinary and magnificent news.

The moment that the boys had imagined for so long had finally arrived. They waved their arms in the air, shouting to the indifferent

mountain peaks which surrounded them that they were saved, and thanking God for that salvation. Then they grew calmer. "We'll have to tidy ourselves up," said Eduardo. "Look at your hair, Carlitos. You'd better comb it."

"What about all that?" said Fernández, pointing to the pieces of human bodies which lay strewn around the plane. "Don't you think we ought to bury it?"

Fito kicked at the surface of the snow with his boot. It was still frozen hard. Then he looked up at the emaciated faces of the boys around him. "We'll never be able to dig a pit while the snow's as hard as this."

"Anyway," said Eduardo, "there's no need to hide what we've done."

Feeling that their rescue must now be near at hand, the boys prepared themselves for the outside world. Páez combed his hair, and even put on some hair oil that he found among the luggage. Sabella and Zerbino put on shirts and neckties. All fourteen tried to find clothes that were a little less filthy. They also cleaned their teeth with the last remaining toothpaste, squeezing it liberally onto toothbrushes and washing out their mouths with snow.

They were ready, but the helicopters did not come. The radio continued to broadcast the news of their rescue. There was even a prayer of thanks from a station in Chile which moved them all as they listened to it, but by midday there was no sign of rescue.

It was not until after one o'clock that they first heard the two helicopters and then saw them. The leading helicopter, shaking and rocking in the wind, came lower and circled above them. They could just make out Parrado. They could also see that others in the helicopter were filming them and taking photographs. The pilot seemed unable to land. The wind buffeted his helicopter so badly that every time he came lower the huge machine was in danger of being blown against the rock face of the nearest mountain.

Eventually, however, the first helicopter, piloted by García, came so low that one of its skis touched the snow. Two packs were thrown from the open door, and a second later two men jumped down.

The first of these was Sergio Díaz of the Andean Rescue Corps, the second the medical orderly. As soon as Díaz had got clear of the blades of the helicopter, he advanced on the boys with open arms. Meanwhile, the two boys nearest to the helicopter ducked under the blades and looked for a way to climb on board. It was no easy matter. García did not dare land on the snow, first because of the

slope and second because he knew the snow would not bear a helicopter's weight. He was therefore hovering, afraid all the time that the blades would touch the side of the mountain. The first boy to climb in was Fernández. He stretched up and was grabbed by Parrado, who pulled him in. The second, hobbling on his broken leg, was Mangino.

With these two passengers, together with Parrado and Colonel Morel, García considered that he had a full load and brought the helicopter up again. Then he hovered while Massa made the same manoeuvre, dropping two more Rescue Corps men and their equipment and picking up Páez, Algorta, Eduardo Strauch and Inciarte—leaving Delgado, Sabella, Francois, Vizintín, Methol, Zerbino, Harley and Fito Strauch with the three Andinists and the medical orderly.

THE COMMAND HEADQUARTERS at San Fernando was given a full list of the sixteen survivors. The radio operator who copied it down handed it over to the man who had taken it upon himself to type out such messages—Carlos Páez Vilaró.

Páez Vilaró would not take it. He knew now that of the forty passengers who had set off in the Fairchild, only sixteen had survived. He did not know if his own son, Carlitos, was one of the sixteen, and when the moment came his terror of the truth proved too much. Without a word he pushed the piece of paper over to Colonel Morel's secretary.

The list was soon typed, and it was not long before, once again, the sixteen names were in front of Páez Vilaró. Still he could not bring himself to look at them. He covered the list with another piece of paper. Just as he did so the telephone rang; it was Radio Carve in Montevideo. "Have you got any news?" they asked.

"Yes," Vilaró replied. "We have the names of the survivors." Slowly he uncovered the first name on the list. "Roberto Canessa," he said, and then repeated, "Roberto Canessa." He pulled the piece of paper a quarter of an inch down the page: "Fernando Parrado," he read, and then: "José Louis Inciarte." Then a little further: "Daniel Fernández ... Carlos Páez ... Carlos Páez." Whereupon tears choked his voice, and for a moment he could read no more.

HARLEY AND NICOLICH, the two fathers who had flown from Mendoza to Santiago in the refrigerated cargo plane, reached San Fernando just before the arrival of the helicopters carrying the first

eight survivors. The two men did not yet know which of the boys were still alive. They pushed their way through the excited crowd and joined Páez Vilaró, who stood with the Uruguayan chargé d'affaires in front of three hundred soldiers drawn up on parade.

Suddenly a cry went up from the crowd—so many of them the same men who had helped Vilaró in his quixotic search. There they saw approaching the three helicopters of the Chilean Air Force which hovered, circled, and then finally touched the tarmac of the parade ground.

The doors slid back and Páez Vilaró the father saw the face of Páez the son. With a cry he surged forward as Carlitos leaped down and ran towards him, and they embraced.

There were no words. For the father the weeks of stubborn lunacy had their reward in the breathing body he held to his own. He wept, and behind him tears poured down the cheeks of the soldiers. For the son, it was enough that he was home in the solid arms of his father. The only flaw in his happiness was the sight of Nicolich's frightened, expectant face.

Carlitos lowered his eyes, unable to face the father of his best friend. When he looked up again he saw that Nicolich was talking to Daniel Fernández. It was quite clear what was being said.

THE HOSPITAL OF ST. JOHN OF GOD in San Fernando had been warned at six that morning by Colonel Morel to expect the survivors from the Uruguayan Fairchild. The director of the hospital immediately formed a team of his most able subordinates to prepare for their arrival. At that time they had no way of knowing the condition the survivors would be in. All they knew was that they had been trapped high in the Andes with little or no food for more than seventy days.

The ambulances arrived with the first eight survivors at ten past three. The boys were driven into the hospital courtyard and then wheeled in on stretchers—all except for Parrado, who insisted on walking, pushing his way through the crowd of nurses and visitors who were watching them arrive.

The nurses were incredulous and tried to get the expeditionary to bed, but he refused to lie down until he had had a bath. The nurses looked bewildered and went to ask the doctors, who shrugged their shoulders and said that they might as well let him have his way.

A bath was run for Parrado. He asked for some shampoo, and a nurse went to fetch her own bottle. Then, at last, Parrado took off his

stinking clothes and sank his body into the bath. He washed himself all over and then lay back in the hot water for an hour and a half. After the bath he felt magnificent, and with a benign indifference he allowed the three perplexed doctors to examine him. Of course Parrado, like the other seven, was severely underweight, weighing nearly four stone less than he usually did. Otherwise, however, they could find nothing wrong with him at all.

Some of the boys had specific complaints which the doctors did what they could to treat. Mangino had a fractured leg; Inciarte's leg was still badly infected; Algorta had a pain in the region of his liver. Mangino also had a slight fever, high blood pressure, and an irregular pulse. Furthermore, the tests that were taken revealed a deficiency of fats, proteins and vitamins in them all. They were also all suffering from burned and blistered lips, conjunctivitis and various skin infections.

It soon became clear to the three doctors who were examining them that these eight boys had been nourished on something more than melted snow over the past ten weeks, and as he examined his leg one of them asked Inciarte, "What was the last thing you ate?"

"Human flesh," Coche replied.

The doctor continued to treat the leg without any comment and without showing any surprise.

Fernández and Mangino both told the doctors what they had eaten up on the mountain, and again the doctors made no comment one way or the other, although they did issue strict instructions that no journalists were to be admitted to the hospital.

Since none of their eight patients was in a critical physical condition, the doctors' concern shifted to the area of their mental health. They had noticed, from the very first, two symptoms among them—first the compulsion to talk and second a dread of being left alone. This behaviour was not extraordinary in young men who had spent ten weeks stranded in the Andes, but taken with the knowledge, newly acquired by the doctors, that their patients were alive thanks to a diet of human flesh, it could be interpreted as the first manifestation of more extreme psychotic behaviour. For this reason the doctors gave instructions that no one was to be let in to see them—not even the mothers of Carlitos and Canessa, who had already arrived from Montevideo.

One man, however, was made an exception to their rule. This was Father Andrés Rojas, the curate in the parish church of San Fernando Rey. He was a man of twenty-six and had been ordained

only the year before. He looked even younger than his age, being small with dark hair, dark skin and a boyish physiognomy. When he got to the hospital he was ushered to the private wing, and there he went into the first room leading off the corridor, which belonged to Coche Inciarte.

It was a good choice, for no sooner was he identified as a priest than a gush of words poured out of the stuttering Coche. He told Father Andrés about the mountain: "It was something no one could have imagined, being so near to God. I have learned that life is love, and that love is giving to your neighbour. The soul of a man is the best thing about him. There is nothing better than giving to a fellow human being..."

As Father Andrés listened, he came to understand the exact nature of the gift to which Inciarte referred—the gift by his dead companions of their own flesh. No sooner did he realize this than the young priest reassured him that there was no sin in what he had done. "I shall be back this afternoon with Communion," he said.

"Then I should like to confess," said Coche.

"You have confessed," said the priest, "in this conversation."

In permitting Father Andrés to visit the survivors, the doctors had chosen a most healing therapy. The decision to eat the bodies of their friends had been a severe trial for the consciences of many of the boys on the mountain. They were all Roman Catholics and were open to the judgment of their church on what they had done. Since it is the teaching of the Catholic Church that anthropophagy *in extremis* is permissible, this young priest was able not so much to forgive them as to tell them that they had done nothing wrong.

THE PARENTS AND RELATIVES of the survivors were not aware of the delicate matter which the doctors had to consider before admitting them, and though most were heroically patient while waiting to see their sons who had risen from the dead, the moment of reunion could be postponed no longer.

Parrado's sister Graciela was incensed to be stopped by a policeman at the door of the private wing, and she furiously pushed past him into Nando's room. No sooner did she see her brother than she burst into tears. Behind her came the bowed, weeping figure of Seler Parrado. This poor man had had his hopes raised by a false list which had put his wife, son and daughter as survivors; it was only now that he had been told that just Nando was alive. But when he saw his son and took him in his arms, joy overcame his sorrow.

In a room of his own, Canessa lay on his bed listening to the voices of the relatives as they entered. Suddenly he looked up and saw at the door his *novia*, Laura Surraco, followed by Mecha Canessa. His mother walked in with serenity and said, "Merry Christmas, Roberto." Then she began to cry, as she saw the wizened face beneath the beard of her son. When Dr. Canessa entered the room, he too burst into tears. When everyone was calmer Roberto began to tell them about the accident and their survival, including what they had eaten to stay alive.

Of the three who received this information, only the father started in shock before gaining sufficient control of himself to conceal his feelings. The two women seemed so happy to have Roberto there that they hardly cared what he said. The doctor, on the other hand, knew just what horrors his son must have been through and just what trials would await him.

None of the other relatives of the boys had thought, in detail, of how their sons' survival might have been achieved. It was inevitable, therefore, that the first knowledge of what had happened should appal them, and the boys understood that this was only natural.

Ten

The eight survivors who were left behind watched the ascent of the two helicopters until both had disappeared over the mountain. Then Zerbino turned to Lucero, one of the three Andinists, and invited him to visit their "home"—the hulk of the Fairchild—while waiting for the helicopters to return. As they made their way towards it, Lucero glanced at the fragments of human bodies which lay scattered over the snow and said, "Have condors been eating the bodies?"

"No," Zerbino replied. "We have."

Lucero said nothing and showed no surprise, but when he reached the Fairchild he hesitated a moment before going in. Zerbino came in with him and explained how they had lived in the confined quarters for so long, and how the avalanche had killed eight of those who had survived the accident. Lucero listened with great sympathy but was unable to ignore the stench which pervaded the inside of the plane. He returned as quickly as he could to the open air.

Meanwhile, the other visitors had been seeing to the remaining survivors—to their medical needs and to the more urgent demands of their bellies. First came beef sandwiches, then orange juice, lemon

juice, soup (heated on the Andinists' stove), and finally some fruit cake. It was a feast.

By around four in the afternoon it became clear that the helicopters would not be returning that night. At once the high spirits of the eight survivors flagged at the miserable thought that they would have to spend another night on the mountain. The Andean Rescuers, noticing this, did what they could to restore their morale. They lit their stove and cooked up more soup—and after that they made coffee. By this time the sun had slipped behind the mountains and it was beginning to get cold. The four Chileans, now sitting in the plane with the boys, started to sing songs to keep up their spirits. Díaz talked to the boys about the life of an Andinist and told them of some of his adventures in the mountains. They in their turn told him in more detail of their ordeal. He warned them that what they had done might come as a shock to the outside world.

"But will people understand?" the boys asked him.

"Of course," he reassured them. "When the full facts are known, everyone will understand that you did what had to be done."

No one slept that night, and early the next morning after their breakfast the boys prepared themselves for rescue. They straightened their clothes and combed their hair once again, and Zerbino brought out of the plane the suitcase which he and Fernández had filled with all the money and documents of the boys who had died. He also brought the tiny red shoe which made up the pair that Parrado had bought in Mendoza.

"You won't be able to take that on the helicopter," the Andinist said, seeing Zerbino with the suitcase.

"I must," Zerbino replied. He explained what the suitcase contained and described to Lucero where the bodies lay which had fallen out of the plane at the top of the mountain.

At about ten o'clock they heard the sound of helicopters and then saw three appear in the sky above them. In the less turbulent air of the morning, the helicopters took none of the buffeting that they had suffered the day before; the first machine came lower and lower until one of its skis was resting on the snow.

One by one the helicopters took on their passengers and rose in the air again.

MEANWHILE, IN THE HOSPITAL in San Fernando, the first group of survivors had slept their first night in a bed for seventy-one days. At eight o'clock Father Andrés returned to the hospital with a cassette

tape recorder with which he recorded statements from the survivors. "We had an enormous desire to survive," said Mangino, "and faith in God. Our group was always united. When the spirits of one went down, the rest made sure to raise them. I changed. I know now that I shall be different to what I was . . . all thanks to God."

"We hope to preach faith to the world," said Carlitos Páez. "Although this experience was sad because of all the friends we lost, it has helped us a lot. If we were able to survive, it was because we all acted with team spirit, with great faith in God—and because we prayed."

At eleven o'clock, mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Rancagua and three other priests in the brick church adjoining the hospital. The survivors, some in wheelchairs, were in the front row of the congregation. It was a momentous occasion for them all.

After the ceremony they prepared to leave for Santiago where all the Uruguayans were to celebrate Christmas, and by the evening of 23 December the whole party of Uruguayans, the survivors with their parents and relatives, had settled in the luxurious Sheraton San Cristóbal Hotel on the edge of the city.

The long weeks of suffering and starvation had left their mark on the boys' behaviour; like spoiled children some would tolerate no restraint, and when not indulging the more overt emotions of joy and delight at this reunion they would lapse into sharpness and irritability—above all with their parents, whose concern for their well-being annoyed them. Had they not proved that they could look after themselves?

These feelings were exacerbated by some parents' reaction to the anthropophagous aspect of the Christmas Miracle, as it was now being called. Unprepared for the news that their sons had eaten human flesh, they had been shocked, and for the most part never alluded to it. Their peace of mind was not assisted by the presence in the hotel of a mass of journalists asking incessant questions.

The next day, 24 December, in the evening, a Christmas party was held at the hotel. It was a moment of intense emotion for them all. The burning faith of Madelon Rodríguez, Rosina Strauch, Mecha Canessa and Sarah Strauch, and the heroic searching of Carlos Páez Vilaró, Jorge Zerbino, Walter Harley and Juan Carlos Canessa—all now had their reward in the living bodies of their sons. As with Abraham and Isaac, God had excused them the sacrifice of their sons. And now the Christian world prepared to celebrate the birth of His own.

It was the calm before the storm, and marked the last untroubled hours they were to spend in Santiago. Journalists from all over the world continued to hover around them, and it was quite clear to the Uruguayans that they had not yet caught the scent of their real prey. It was not that the boys or their parents conspired to conceal what they had done; it was just that they hoped the news could be kept until they were back in Montevideo.

The story—which had been given to the papers by the Andinists—broke in a Peruvian newspaper and was immediately picked up by the Argentinian, Chilean and Brazilian papers. As soon as the journalists in Santiago sniffed the story, they fell once again upon the survivors and asked if it was true. The boys conferred as to what they should do and decided that, rather than talk about what had happened to any particular newspaper, they would hold a news conference when they returned to Montevideo. Since they had been in touch with the president of the Old Christians, Daniel Juan, they agreed that the conference should be held at their old school, the Stella Maris College.

THE BOEING 727 of LAN CHILE which had been chartered to fly the survivors and their families back to Montevideo was given the elite crew used when President Allende himself went aboard. It taxied across the tarmac at Carrasco airport and came to a stop outside the same airport building that they had left so optimistically almost eleven weeks before.

The differences between that departure and this return were many; while only one or two members of their families had come to see them off, the whole city of Montevideo seemed now to be there to greet them, including the wife of the president of Uruguay. The balconies of the airport building were lined with shouting, waving people, and there were lines of police to keep this crowd from surging onto the tarmac.

The survivors and their families were ushered into buses, which drove up alongside the aeroplane and then took them straight out of the airport towards the Stella Maris College. Everything was ready for their arrival.

The large brick assembly hall had been laid out as for a prize-giving, with a long table on a podium and a system of microphones and loudspeakers which would enable the many journalists to hear what was said. Daniel Juan took his seat in the centre of the podium and the conference began.



Christmas Eve, 1972: the survivors and their relatives celebrate at the Sheraton San Cristóbal Hotel, Sanhago.

The survivors had decided that they would speak in turn, each of them taking a particular aspect of their experience, and when they had finished they would ask the Uruguayan press if they wished to question them further. Pancho Delgado had volunteered to treat the question of cannibalism.

The conference began. The whole room listened in silence as, one after the other, the survivors told their heroic and tragic story, until it was Delgado's turn. Almost at once his eloquence—which had been of such little use on the mountain—came into its own.

“When one awakes in the morning amid the silence of the mountains, one feels alone, alone in the world but for the presence of God. For I can assure you that God is there. We all felt it, and not because we were the kind of pious youths who are always praying all day long. Not at all. But there one feels the presence of God. One feels, above all, what is called the hand of God, and allows oneself to be guided by it.... And when the moment came when we did not have any more food, or anything of that kind, we thought to ourselves that if Jesus at His last supper had shared His flesh and blood with His apostles, then it was a sign to us that we should do the same. In a foreign country we tried to approach the subject in as

elevated a spirit as possible, and now we tell it to you, our fellow countrymen, exactly as it was . . .”

As Delgado finished, it was quite evident that the entire company was deeply moved by what he had said, and when Daniel Juan asked the assembled journalists if they had any questions to ask the survivors he was told that there were none. Whereupon the whole room burst into a spontaneous hurrah for the gentlemen of the Uruguayan and international press, followed by a final cheer for those who had not returned

TWENTY-NINE OF THOSE who had left in the Fairchild had not returned, and for the families of those twenty-nine the return of the sixteen meant the confirmation of their deaths. It was, moreover, a confirmation of a disturbing nature. The Abals learned of the physical suffering of their son; the Nogueiras faced the mental agony of theirs. Every member of every family confronted the knowledge that their husbands, mothers and sons were not only dead but might have been eaten.

It was a bitter admixture to hearts already brimful with sorrow for, however noble and rational the mind may have been in contemplation of this end, there was a primitive and irrepressible horror at the idea that the body of their beloved should have been used in this way. For the most part, however, they mastered this repugnance. The parents showed the same selflessness and courage as their sons had done and rallied round the sixteen survivors. Dr. Valeta, the father of Carlos, went with his family to the press conference and afterwards spoke to the newspaper *El Pais*. “I came here with my family,” he said, “because we wanted to see all those who were the friends of my son and because we are sincerely happy to have them back among us. I’d like to say, furthermore, that I knew from the very first moment what has been confirmed today. As a doctor I understood at once that no one could have survived in such a place and under such conditions without resort to courageous decisions. Now that I have confirmation of what has happened I say: Thank God that the forty-five were there, for sixteen homes have regained their children.”

WITH THE CONCLUSION OF the press conference, the public ordeal of the survivors came to an end, and they were able at last to return to the homes and families of which they had dreamed while imprisoned high up in the Andes.

It was not easy to adapt to the reality. Their experience had been long and terrible; its effect had gone deep into both their conscious and subconscious minds and their behaviour reflected this shock. Many of the boys were often moody and silent or would talk compulsively about the accident.

They all agreed, however, that their ordeal on the mountain had changed their attitude towards life. Suffering and privation had taught them how frivolous their lives had been. Each day that passed had peeled off layer upon layer of superficiality until they were left only with what they truly cared for: their families, their *novias*, their faith in God and their homeland. They now determined to take their work more seriously, to be more devout in their religious observances, and to dedicate more time to their families.

Nor did they intend to keep what they had learned to themselves. Many of them—especially Canessa, Páez, Sabella, Inciarte, Mangino and Delgado—felt a sense of vocation to make use of their experience in some way. They felt touched by God and inspired by Him to teach others the lesson of love and self-sacrifice which their suffering had taught them. If the world had been shocked by the knowledge that they had eaten the bodies of their friends, this shock should be used to show the world just what it can mean to love one's neighbour as oneself.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE CAUSES of the accident was conducted by the air forces of both Uruguay and Chile. Both blamed the crash on the human error of the pilot, who had begun his descent towards Santiago when still in the middle of the Andes. The actual spot where the plane had crashed was nowhere near Curicó. The mountain on which the boys had spent so many days lay on the Argentine side of the frontier, between the Sosneado and the Tinguiririca volcanoes. It was estimated that if the expeditionaries had followed the valley beyond the tail instead of climbing the mountain to the west, they would have come to a road in three days.

Though some of the parents felt anger towards the Uruguayan Air Force for the incompetence of its pilots, on the whole they accepted what had happened as the will of God and were grateful to Him for those who had returned.

ON 18 JANUARY 1973, ten members of the Andean Rescue Corps, together with Freddy Bernales of the SAR, Lieutenant Enrique Crosa of the Uruguayan Air Force, and a Catholic priest, Father

Ivan Caviedes, were flown in helicopters to the wreck of the Fairchild. There they pitched camp, and set about gathering the remains of the dead. They climbed to the top of the mountain to recover those bodies which were there and had now been uncovered by the melting of the snow.

A spot was found about half a mile from the site of the accident which was sheltered from possible avalanches and had enough earth to make a grave. Here they buried those bodies which were still intact and all the remains of those which were not. A rough stone altar was built beside the grave, and over it was placed an iron cross about three feet high. The cross was painted orange and on one side of it in black was the inscription "The World to Its Uruguayan Brothers", while on the other side were painted the words "Nearer, O God, to Thee."

After saying mass, Father Caviedes gave an address to the men who had assisted at the ceremony. Then the Andinists returned to the hulk of the Fairchild, splashed it with petrol, and set it on fire.

The plane burned quickly in the strong wind.



PIERS PAUL READ is pictured here with some of the survivors (*standing*, left to right A Strauch, PPR, E Strauch, J C Pérez, *kneeling* Sabella, Canessa; Soon after their return to Montevideo, the survivors decided that they would authorize only one writer to give an unvarnished account of what happened. Their unanimous choice was Piers Paul Read.

The son of the writer and art historian, Sir Herbert Read, Piers Paul Read was educated at Ampleforth and Cambridge. He has travelled extensively and written several books, including eight novels. He is married with three children and lives in London.

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